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POCKET NOVELS

Old Bear-Paw.

100



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OLD BEAR-PAW,
THE TRAPPER KING:

OR,

THE LOVE OF A BLACKFOOT QUEEN.

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D BEAR-PAW.

CHAPTER I.

THE BROKEN CHIEF.

"I WONDER what has become of that everlasting Yankee? He promised to meet me here at noon, yet I have stood here and seen the shadows of these old pines lengthen for the last hour. Surely something must have happened to detain him, for he never deceived me yet, and I do not like to believe he will commence now—"

"Yew are 'tarnal right; he won't!" interrupted the second speaker, who was no other than the "everlasting Yankee" himself.

Thus soliloquized the celebrated scout, Lew Kelly, and thus replied his tried friend and companion, Jehiel Filkins, as they stood upon a peak of the Black Hills, west a five-day's ride from Fort Randall—the nearest place where white men could be found, for they were already in the hunting-grounds of the Blackfeet.

The two scouts, well mounted, and armed to the teeth, were spending a sort of vacation in that dreaded vicinity to satisfy themselves as to the truth of certain rumors, rife at Fort Randall and Yankton, concerning the gold, which it was asserted was laying around loose in the ravines and damp, dark gulches of the Black Hills; and of the existence, in the hills and valleys of the North-west, of bear, elk, antelope and beaver, which an adventurous scout had asserted made that country a perfect paradise for the hunter and trapper.

They had gone far enough, and seen enough to convince them that there was good foundation for these rumors. Gold they had found in the black sand washed down from the hills, and in the quartz ledges underlying or jutting out from

the very crag upon which they stood. As to game, they wondered they had not heard of it before, so abundant was it.

"What was you sayin', Lew?" asked Filkins. "Are you getting in a hurry to go home? Wal, I ain't, then. There ain't an Ingin within forty miles of here, and if there was I know you would not be afeared of them; but if you will wait just a week longer I will go *anywhere* with you, if it's to Halifax."

"You said those same words, ten days ago, Jehiel, yet here we are, a hundred miles further west than we were then."

"Sartin!" replied Jehiel. "But what's the hurry, Lew? You're too old a scout to get homesick so soon; I wouldn't."

"Mighty good reason why you wouldn't, and why you never tire out or get homesick. *Your* home is wherever you happen to find yourself, and you care for nothing but that old coat of yours. Besides, you forget that away over the hills there a dear little wife is waiting and watching for me, and no doubt alarmed at my protracted stay."

"Jes' so, Lew. A scout has no business gettin' married. It e'ena'most makes a coward outen him—"

"You lie, and you know it!" exclaimed the scout, angrily. "Have you forgotten our fight with the Blackfeet, two years ago? Where would your old yellow scalp have gone to then, if it had not been for me? and wasn't I married then, you old fool?"

"Cor-reck, Lew; I take it all back, and beg yer pardon. But, I never see'd such a kentry fur game as this, and besides, I hev' jes' set my heart on goin' over to that round peak there where it looks so foggy. You see it is right on the home stretch, and I can camp there while you pack up and foller to-morrer."

"All right, Jehiel; I will wait another day. But if you are bound to go you had better make a start; it is a good ten miles over there and a pretty rough trail."

"Cor-reck ag'in, Lew, and I'll jog along"

And the Yankee shouldered his rifle and started for the designated point. He was soon out of sight of the scout, who descended the western slope of the bluff and made his

way to their camp, beside a limpid stream which flowed through the valley to the north.

He had nearly reached his camp when a sight met his eye which caused him to halt and take shelter behind a tree.

He saw, coming down the valley from the west, three persons on horseback, who seemed to be riding for dear life.

Two rode side by side, and fully a hundred yards in advance of the third, and all were lashing their horses to their best speed.

Of those pursued, one was evidently a female, and as she was bound, it was also evident that she was a prisoner.

The Indian in the rear, who was in such hot pursuit of the foremost, was lashing his horse in a perfect fury; and as they passed the tree where the scout was concealed, he said:

"It looks like a long chase, but I don't see any signs of anybody after them. If the squaw was only a white woman I would sail in and help her out of the fix—but then it is none of my business, and I guess I won't meddle. And I reckon they have too much on their hands now to take any notice of me."

Just as he reached his camp he looked after the Indians and saw the horse of the pursuer drop dead from exhaustion, and its rider was thrown violently upon the rocky path.

The Indian lay so very still that the scout thought he must be dead, and he started out to ascertain.

As he approached the fallen Indian, he discovered that he was still conscious, though unable to stand upon his feet.

The Indian was the first to break silence.

"Me know you—you are White Panther!"

"Yes, that is what some folks call me. But who are you, and what is the matter with you?"

"Me Gray Eagle, big chief of the Blackfeet. Heap matter! Leg broke, arm broke! Red Pine, the Sioux, has stolen Snowdrop, the daughter of Gray Eagle, and if I can not get her back, then my heart broke!"

"Then you are old Gray Eagle, are you? Are you alone?"

"Gray Eagle all alone. Kill him if you want."

"Well, I don't know as I want to; scalping broken-legged Injuns is not my business, just now. But, I'll tell you what I will do! If you will agree not to make war upon the whites again, but let them hunt and trap in these hills when they please, I will go for Snowdrop, and I will not return until I bring her and Red Pine's scalp! What do you say?"

"Gray Eagle will promise!"

"But your promise is not worth shucks unless you swear to it."

"Gray Eagle will swear!"

"Swear by the Great Spirit?"

"Yes."

"Swear by your knife and your tomahawk, and your horse?—even if he is dead he is good enough to swear by."

"Yes, I swear by all these that I will be a friend to the pale-faces as long as I live if Snowdrop is saved."

"Well, I don't know but that is about all you can do, and I will trust you; though if Jehiel was here he would say, 'Shoot him and let the Sioux keep the gal.' But I will carry you to my camp, and then I will go for Snowdrop; and I'll get her, too, if I have to follow Red Pine clear home!"

The scout raised the chief in his arms and carried him to the camp.

"There," he said, as he laid the chief upon a blanket, "you keep quiet until I come back."

He called his horse, a beautiful black stallion, and mounting, started on the trail of the Sioux.

CHAPTER XI.

SMITTEN

THE daughter of Gray Eagle was one of the very few handsome Indian women. Though not more than sixteen years of age, she deserved the proud distinction she had won of be-

ing the flower of the Blackfoot nation, and the only really beautiful girl in the tribe.

Dozens of chiefs had sought in vain to win her heart; even brave warriors from other tribes had offered fabulous gifts for her; but her father gave them all the same answer—that Snowdrop was the idol of his heart, and that he would not force her to marry a brave she did not like.

As for Snowdrop herself, she had never loved any one except her father, and consequently none of the braves received any encouragement.

But, Red Pine, a cruel chief of the Sioux, had seen her, and with him, to see her was to covet her; so he did not ask the consent of any one, but, watching his chance when the Blackfeet were nearly all gone on a hunt, and Gray Eagle was confined by sickness, he had stolen her away.

Gray Eagle had followed on the trail, and when within rifle-shot of the Sioux, had met with the accident already narrated.

Red Pine, seeing the fall of Gray Eagle, immediately slackened his speed so as to save his horse as much as possible; for the chase had been a long one, and they were now fully thirty miles from the Blackfoot village. But he would not have ridden so slowly had he known who was upon his trail in the place of Gray Eagle.

"Would Snowdrop like to rest?" he asked.

The only reply he received was a flash of scorn from the wondrously black eyes of the captive.

"Ugh!" he grunted. "Snowdrop mad now, but by-and-by Red Pine *make* her talk!"

Snowdrop looked back to see what had become of her father, and she could no longer hear the sound of his horse's feet.

Red Pine also looked back and saw, what she evidently did not, that a well-armed and well-mounted white man was upon his trail. Furiously he lashed the horses ridden by himself and Snowdrop, and once more they flew down the rough valley.

Not long before he had received a severe chastisement at the hands of a party of white men, and he actually dreaded this single man who was now in pursuit of him more than he would have done the whole Blackfoot nation.

Lash as he would, his pursuer rapidly gained upon him. He stopped his horse, and placing himself behind Snowdrop, he drew her to him so that her form covered his breast, and drawing his knife, held it above her breast, resolved to kill her rather than give her up.

Snowdrop was prepared for the blow, but it never fell. With a howl of mingled rage and pain, the Sioux sprung from his horse, his arm hanging limp and useless at his side, and darted into the bushes, where it was impossible for any one to follow him, just as the scout rode up.

Snowdrop, when she discovered that she had merely changed captors, was at first inclined to be angry, but when Kelly drew his knife and cut the thongs which bound her hands, at the same time saying that she was free, she replied :

"Snowdrop can not thank the pale-face, but he has saved her life, and now she is his."

"Gracious ! I don't want you !" replied the scout. "Now you hold my horse until I find that red-skin and get his scalp, then I will take you to your father."

But he was unsuccessful. The Sioux had taken care to hide his trail, and the scout soon returned, and mounting his horse, led the way back to camp.

Neither spoke, but Snowdrop thought, "What a handsome man he is," and for the first time in her life she was in love. She had yet to learn that it takes two to make a bargain, though she resolved to win the love of the brave scout, or die.

When they reached the camp where Kelly had left the old chief, they found him sitting beside the fire, endeavoring to tie a cloth around his broken leg. An expression of pleasure lit up his swarthy face as he saw his daughter unharmed ; then, as his eye rested upon the belt of the scout, Kelly said, as if anticipating his thoughts :

"No ; the red devil got away that time. You see, I had to break his arm, or he would have struck the girl to the heart. But never mind, I will have his scalp yet ; for I never go back on my word with any man, be he red or white. I brought back his horse for you, and I don't suppose you are far from your village, so you can go home when you please."

"White Panther is a great brave, but Red Pine has many

warriors with him, and they may come and take Snowdrop from him. The village of Gray Eagle is only a day's ride from here; will the white brave build a smoke to call the warriors of Gray Eagle here?"

"Yes," replied Kelly, "and while I am about it, suppose you have Snowdrop get something to eat. There is plenty here," he said, pointing to several saddles of venison hanging in the trees near by. Then Kelly went to build the smokes.

The transparency of the atmosphere in that region is such that objects can be seen at a great distance; for example, a mountain presents a distinct and bold outline at fifty or sixty miles, and may occasionally be seen as far as a hundred miles.

The Indians, availing themselves of this fact, have been in the habit of practicing a system of telegraphing by means of smokes by day, and fires by night, and there are but few men who have crossed the mountains who have not seen these signals made and responded to from peak to peak, in rapid succession.

The Indians thus make known to their friends many items of information highly important to them. If enemies or strangers make their appearance in the country, the fact is telegraphed at once, giving them time to secure their animals and to prepare for attack, defense or flight.

War or hunting parties, after having been absent a long time from their friends at home, and not knowing where to find them, make use of the same preconcerted signals to indicate their presence.

Very dense smokes may be raised by kindling a large fire with dry wood, and piling upon it the green boughs of pine, balsam, or hemlock. This throws off a heavy cloud of black smoke which can be seen very far.

Kelly proceeded to the top of the bluff where we first met him, and soon three long, white columns of smoke were rising heavenward. This done, he returned to his camp, and found dinner awaiting him.

Snowdrop presented him a nicely broiled steak upon a clean bark plate, and was well repaid for her trouble by the smile he gave her, and complimented her upon her skill in cookery.

After dinner Kelly set the broken limbs as well as was possible with the appliances at hand. When completed, he said :

"Will Gray Eagle remain with me until morning? Then I will start on the trail of the Sioux."

"Why does my white brother stop here?"

"I'm waiting for my partner, who went to visit a big hill over to the north-east. He was going to stay until morning, but that smoke will bring him as soon as he sees it; anyhow, I won't go without him!"

"It is right for White Panther to be true to his brother, but the Sioux will be upon our trail before morning."

"Well, let them come. If they do, you can make a big addition to your stock of scalps."

Suddenly the sound of footsteps was heard, and in a moment Jehiel Filkins stood before them.

"Glad you are back, for we have got some work to do."

"I thought there was something up," he replied, "though I was on my way back when I see'd your smokes. Then, you just bet, I traveled! But say, I'm awful hungry! Who is that handsome creetur'?" he asked, as he set about getting his dinner.

"Oh! she is the daughter of that old cub who lays in there with a broken leg."

"It strikes me I have seen him somewhere, before, but I never see'd such a pretty gal as that, any place."

"Well," replied Kelly, "pitch in and make love to her if you want to, and marry her if you can. I'm sure you need some one to mend your clothes. But I have not told you yet that we have got to escort them to their village."

"Yes, we will," said Jehiel, "and lose our scalps for our kindness!"

"We won't do any such thing. I have been making a treaty of peace with Gray Eagle, and he has promised not to fight the pale-faces any more!"

"Wal, what's an Injun's promise good for?" asked Jehiel.

"You don't know them as well as I do, or you would not ask such a question!"

"No, I s'pose not—nor you don't know 'em as well as you

will a year from now. But," he continued, "if we are going, let us be on the move. I will eat as we ride along."

Snowdrop was well pleased when she heard Jehiel speak thus, and smiled as she said:

"The Long Hunter is brave and good to be the brother of White Panther."

"Much obleeged," said Jehiel, "but he ain't my brother, though he is a bully boy, and fit to be the brother of a king."

Lifting the wounded chief to his saddle, they started up the valley, Kelly taking the lead, the chief next, and Snowdrop behind him, while Jehiel brought up the rear; preferring to be where he could admire the lovely form of the Indian girl.

"By Gunner!" he muttered, "but *ain't* she nice! I'll do something desperate, and marry her or bu'st!"

Truth to tell, Jehiel Filkins was desperately and irrevocably in love, but he was "counting his chickens" too soon.

In the midst of his reverie he was made aware of a sudden halt, and he looked up to see what was the matter.

CHAPTER III.

THE SIOUX STROKE.

WHEN the scout had halted, of course the others stopped and Jehiel found himself close beside the object of his meditations before he had fairly recovered from his day-dream. But close ahead he saw a camp-fire, and the silly lover was at once transformed into the brave scout.

He rode to the front, and took his stand beside Kelly with his gun cocked and ready for service.

"White men, and a hard-looking lot they are too!" exclaimed Kelly.

Seated around the camp-fire were a dozen men, who, as soon as they discovered the party of our friends, sprung to their feet, and stood ready with their guns.

"Come on," said Kelly, "we may as well be bold about it, for we are too close to back out now."

The strangers stepped out in front of their camp, and waited for the scout to approach.

He had seen too many of that class of men before on the plains and in the mountains, not to know that he had come across a gang of road agents, though he was at a loss to imagine what they could be after, in that section.

He knew that these outlaws were frequently in league with the Indians, and he did not know but this party were in some way connected with the Sioux, from whom he was endeavoring to escape.

The leader of the party of whites was the only good-looking one in the crowd; the rest wearing a hang-dog, ruffianly look, as if they had been life-long murderers. The leader saluted Kelly with:

"Hello, stranger, which way are you going?"

"North," replied Kelly, "as you can see, if you use your eyes!"

"Yes, I see; but what are you going for?"

"It is not evident to my mind that it is any of your business where we are going," replied the scout. "I don't mind telling you, however, that we are bound for the village of the Blackfeet."

"What may I call your name? It strikes me I have seen you somewhere before to-day."

"You may call me Robinson Crusoe, if it will do you any good, though that isn't my name; and it is barely possible you have seen me somewhere, for I have been there several times."

"Where?"

"I told you *somewhere*!"

"Well, where are you from?" asked the stranger.

"Home!" replied Kelly.

The stranger laughed and said:

"I am not likely to get much information out of you! I believe there are some men in this western country who dare not tell their names."

"You do, eh? Well, I am not one of them," replied Kelly.

"Who said you was?"

Kelly made no reply, but turning to his party, said: "Come on," and was about to start when the stranger again accosted him with—"Won't you stop and camp with us?"

The scout noticed the looks which the ruffians bestowed upon the Indian girl, and did not like them, and he replied.

"No, I thank you. We have plenty of provisions, and will make our camp a few rods away."

"All right," said the leader, "I will come over and make you a visit after supper."

Kelly rode on about eighty rods, and halted beside a stream, saying, as he dismounted:

"We will camp here. But," he added, "you can all make up your minds to leave here before daylight."

"Heap good!" said Gray Eagle. "White Panther knows what is best, and Gray Eagle trusts his life with him. White Panther has said he would take him to his village."

"Yes," replied Kelly, "and I will do it; you need not worry any more."

The wounded chief was taken from his horse and laid upon the soft grass, and while Kelly went to find a good place in which to secure the horses, Snowdrop set about getting the supper. In this occupation she was assisted by Jehiel, who, as we have said, was desperately in love with the beautiful squaw.

Shortly after Kelly had returned to the fire, the leader of the other party came into their camp, and entered into conversation with him.

"You were not brought up on the plains, though you seem to be an old hand at camp-life," he said.

"How do you know that?" asked Kelly.

"Because you do not look like a plainsman or a common trapper neither do you use such language as is common with that class."

"I see" laughingly replied Kelly. "You think if a kitten is born in an oven it must surely be a loaf of bread! But you are mistaken. I have spent my life, or all of it that I can remember, west of the Mississippi; and I never went to school a day in my life. Manners and language are like the

small pox, contagious; and if I have caught more than most men in my calling, it is my good luck, not education."

"Well, will you tell me your name now?"

"I don't know of any reason why I should not, as I never done any thing to disgrace it. It is Kelly; my friends call me Lew, for short—"

"What! Lew Kelly, the famous scout? Your name is well known all along the frontier, and I am glad to meet you, though I must confess I am somewhat disappointed."

"In what respect?" asked Kelly.

"Why I expected to see a great burly fellow, who could whip his weight in wild-cats, but you are not much older than I am; nor much, if any, larger."

"A gentle hint that you think you can whip me," said Kelly.

"No, sir, nothing of the kind; and I hope I may never have any occasion to try it."

"You will be liable to get the worth of your money if you do," replied the scout. "But will you tell me your name?"

"You may call me Curtiss, if you please—those fellows over there call me Captain."

"Well, Captain Curtiss, it is none of my business, perhaps, what you do, or what becomes of you, who you are, or where you are going; but I shall not be doing my duty unless I tell you that you are liable to get into a pretty lively muss before morning."

"What makes you think so?" asked Curtiss.

"I have every reason to believe that a large body of Sioux are on our trail, under Red Pine, the fellow from whom I rescued this girl. If they do not try to recapture her, then I am no judge of Indian nature."

"I am much obliged to you," said Curtiss. "I will be ready for them, if they come. And now, good-night."

After he had gone, Jehiel sat beside Kelly and talked for nearly an hour. It was arranged between them that they would remain on guard, and Jehiel said:

"Come now, Lew, you turn in and sleep till midnight, and I will take the first trick at watching."

"Wait a few minutes," replied Kelly; "I want to see how

they are fixed over there ;" and he proceeded to inspect the camp of the strangers.

He soon returned, and to the inquiry of Jehiel, he said :

"The fools have all gone to sleep, and left a big fire over there. If the Sioux should come, they will get the first slice, that's sure." He gave the fire a kick, and rolling himself in his blanket was soon asleep.

The camp-fire of the strangers had burned low and no unnatural sounds could be heard, when Jehiel awoke the scout to take his place.

"You should have called me before, Jehiel, you will not get much sleep, I am afraid."

"Who keers a durn? I'll be ready when you are!" and Jehiel sought his blankets and sleep.

Kelly began his watch, keeping in the shade of the bushes, and for nearly an hour he heard no unusual noise. Then the breaking of a twig between himself and the camp-fire of the strangers alarmed him, and he crouched down to the ground the better to watch the movements of whatever was prowling around.

The object was moving as stealthily as a cat, and Kelly could not discover it until it passed an open spot where the fire light reflected upon it, when he made the somewhat alarming discovery of a Sioux warrior; and he had barely time to notice that he was in his war-paint.

The question arose, what should he do? The problem was solved by the Indian himself, who was now coming straight toward the tree behind which the scout was concealed.

Nearer and nearer he came, until the brave scout could hear him breathe, and as he passed the tree could have touched him.

The Indian halted to listen, and apparently satisfied, started on. He had taken but one step when the scout sprung upon him, and with a single blow of the keen-pointed knife the Indian sunk to the ground without a groan.

It was but the work of a moment for the scout to secure the horses, and lead them to the camp.

Here he gave Jehiel a kick which brought that worthy to his feet with "Durn yer pictur'," when he was inter-

rupted by Kelly placing his hand over his mouth, and saying :

"Keep still, and saddle the horses ; the Indians are here."

Then he silently awoke the chief and said, "Let us go." Gray Eagle and Snowdrop were soon ready for a start.

"Here, Jehiel, you take the chief and the girl and go on down the creek ; I will join you in a few minutes."

"Where are you going ?" asked Jehiel.

"I am going to tell the strangers to be on their guard," and the brave man, unmindful of his own peril, mounted his horse and started for the camp of the strangers ; while Jehiel, and the chief and his daughter, went down the stream.

Kelly had got about half-way to the other camp when a dark figure sprung from the bushes in front of him, and struck at the head of the scout.

He missed his mark, but not so Kelly, who reached out and dealt the Indian a blow between the eyes which brought him to the ground.

Spurring over the prostrate body he drove into the camp of the strangers, shouting as he went :

"Up, men, for your lives ! The Sioux are here !"

A hundred dusky forms sprung up as if by magic, and the air was filled with murderous yells. Drawing his revolver he shot right and left, an Indian falling with every shot.

The first thought of the brave scout was to join his party as soon as possible, but his afterthought was worthy of him. He knew that to insure the safety of Jehiel, Gray Eagle, and Snowdrop, he must go in an opposite direction, and thus lead the Sioux in pursuit of himself rather than his friends.

The impulse was a brave and noble one, well worthy of the scout, and he turned his horse, resolving to trust to his speed.

A row of angry, painted faces met him, but he charged through their ranks, shooting two Indians as he went.

Then he became aware that another horse was close beside his, and turning in his saddle he beheld Snowdrop, who had followed him, and was now close by his side.

"Come on, girl. Ride for your life!" he shouted "and keep close to me."

He turned his horse in the direction of the stream, and in a few minutes both horses were dashing through the water, and up the opposite bank. The scout never paused except to see that the Indian girl was safe across, and having satisfied himself on that score he dashed ahead.

Meanwhile the camp of the strangers was the scene of a bloody conflict. The white men were battling desperately for their lives, but they had been surprised, and the scout knew from the rapid and incessant firing, that the battle could not last long.

He halted and listened to the noise of the conflict upon the opposite side of the stream. All at once it ceased, and as he was wondering which party had met with success, there came to his ears a wild, prolonged shout, which was answered by a single yell of defiance.

"That sounds as if them white men had passed in their checks, and the Sioux had won the battle." He looked at Snowdrop as he spoke, and her eyes were looking sorrowfully in his own, as she said:

"My father is a prisoner. He has tried to follow me and the Sioux have found him. Now he must burn."

"I guess not," replied the scout; "but why didn't you stay with him and Jehiel?"

"Snowdrop had rather *die* with the White Panther, whom she loves, than *live* with any one else!"

"Well, you are a queer one, though, when I told you I did not want you. I have one wife already, and that is all the law allows a white man. But, I'll tell you, Snowdrop, there's Jehiel is in love with you head over heels, and he will take you if you'll only give him half a chance."

"The White Panther saved my life, and I will never cook meat for any other man!"

"Oh, fudge! You'll get over that before long."

"Never. What will Snowdrop do now they have taken her father, and will burn him?"

"Keep cool, little gal! They have not burned him yet, and I have promised Gray Eagle that I would give him the scalp of Red Pine, and I'll do it. They have probably got

Jehiel too ; and now, girl, it's about daylight, and I want you to ride as fast as you can to the village of your people, and bring back all the warriors you can get. I will stay here and wait for you, and when you get back we will give them Sioux particular fits !"

Without a word the Indian girl obeyed, and was soon lost to the sight of the scout.

CHAPTER IV.

THE YANKEE'S QUEST.

AFTER the Indian girl had departed on her mission, Kelly rode his horse into a thicket of willows beside the stream, and tied him. The scout then ascended the hill and looked in the direction of the late battle-field, but it was not yet light enough for him to discern any thing.

A tall, bushy oak stood near.

"Just the thing," said the scout. "I'll climb this tree, and then perhaps I can see what they are about. They are too quiet to suit my idea, and I shouldn't wonder but they are up to some new deviltry. Of course they have not found Snow-drop, and as that is about all they are after they will not give up the search. Then they'll be tramping around on my trail. But let them come ; they will not find the Indian girl, for she is a good piece toward home by this time."

The scout was now among the branches of the trees, from which he could get a good view of the surrounding country and there, for a short time, we will leave him and take a look at the camp of the victorious Sioux.

Upon the ground sat Gray Eagle, Curtiss, and Jehiel Filkins, while in front of them stood Red Pine, the Sioux chief.

"Ugh !" he said, addressing Gray Eagle, "Red Pine has got you at last ; and now as soon as he gets Snowdrop he will start for home !"

"Red Pine will never get her. She is far toward the vil

lage of the Blackfeet, with the White Panther, and will bring enough of the warriors of Gray Eagle upon the trail of the cowardly Sioux that will sweep them from the face of the earth!"

"Waugh! Gray Eagle talks brave! He forgets that he is the prisoner of Red Pine."

"No, Gray Eagle does not forget. He is ready to die; he does not care as long as his daughter is safe."

Before the sun goes down Snowdrop will be a prisoner like her father. Sioux warriors are on her trail, and she rides alone. The pale-face has left her to take care of herself, and she shall yet sit in the lodge of Red Pine!"

"Then let me die!" said Gray Eagle.

"No. The Blackfoot shall go to the village of the Sioux, and when he sees Snowdrop the slave of Red Pine then he shall die by torture!"

Then addressing Captain Curtiss, he said:

"What does the pale-face want here?"

"We were just traveling through the country on our way to Oregon," replied the captain.

"Do you know Gray Eagle, the Blackfoot?"

"No; I never saw him until last night."

"And the pale-face who went with the Blackfoot squaw?"

"I do not know him. I have nothing to do with either."

"Red Pine will keep the pale-face, but he shall die with the Blackfoot dog!"

Then to Jehiel:

"This other pale-face squaw—what right has he here, and what does he want?"

"None of yer business, you darned fool! Now what are you goin' to do about it?"

"Red Pine will make you cry before long!"

"No you won't, you old sucker; you can't do that little thing," replied the scout.

"We will see. When the sun shows its face above the trees, the pale-face shall die by fire."

"The sooner the better, old stoughton bottle. It's a chilly night, and a little fire will do a fellow good."

"Red Pine says you shall *die*!"

"Yaas, I heerd you, you dirty squaw thief, but you Sioux will lie so that a feller can't depend on what you say. If you should accidentally be telling the truth, it will be better to die than live around where you are!"

"Pale-face talks brave now; we will hear him cry when he eats fire!"

"Oh, shut up, you maw-mouthed imp, and go on with your concert!"

The Sioux chief took Jehiel at his word, and ordered the prisoner to be bound to the stake, and almost before Jehiel knew what he was about, the brush and dry wood were piled nearly to his chin.

When this was accomplished the chief said to him:

"When the sun shows his face above the trees, let the pale-face squaw burn!" and the scout sung:

"Walk along, John, don't stay long,
Hurry right home to your own chickabiddy—"

and calmly awaited the torture.

And that was what Kelly saw from his perch in the tree, upon the opposite bank of the stream.

"*That* will never do!" he exclaimed; "I must hurry up, or they will roast Jehiel, in spite of fate."

Descending the tree he mounted his horse and started for the scene of torture.

It was well for him, perhaps, that the Sioux were so busy preparing for the torture and therefore did not see him approaching.

He was within a few rods, when a warrior was seen approaching, with a blazing firebrand, and stood awaiting the order of the chief to fire the pile.

Soon the order came, and just as he was about to apply the brand, the report of a rifle was heard, his arm fell at his side, and with a cry of rage and pain he ran beyond the circle of warriors.

The Sioux stood in mute astonishment at the turn of affairs, and at that instant Kelly dashed through the line and to the prisoner, and without dismounting, cut the thongs which bound Jehiel to the stake.

"Jump up here, behind me," he shouted, and before the

Sioux had recovered from their surprise, they had reached the bottom of the hill and were dashing at top speed down the valley.

As would naturally be expected, the Sioux started in pursuit, but their ponies were no match for the powerful black of the scout, and they were soon left far behind.

"Gunner! Lew, but you happened around just in time, didn't you? Them yer fellers was goin' to heat up my car-kiss!" were the first words spoken.

"How did you fall into their hands?" asked Kelly.

"W'y, you see, when old Gray Eagle found out that his gal wasn't along, he jest turns his hoss's tail like an old fool, and cuts after her! Say, Lew, where is the little angel gone to?"

"Home," replied the scout.

"Hold on a minute!" exclaimed Jehiel; "my horse is in here somewhere. Wait until I find him, then we can go the faster."

Dismounting, he soon found the horse, and again they started on down the valley.

"We must go a little slow," said Kelly, "or the Sioux will give up the chase."

"Don't you want them to?" demanded Jehiel, in some surprise.

"No, I don't; at least, not until I get a shot at some of them."

"Cor-reck!" responded Jehiel. "I didn't think of that. Let's find a good place, and stop until they come up."

A few rods ahead they found a pile of rocks, and secreting themselves and their horses behind these, they awaited the approach of the pursuing party.

These soon appeared, tearing down the valley totally unconscious of danger, and when within a few rods of the ambuscade, Kelly whispered to Jehiel:

"You take the leader, and I will take that fellow in the rear; that will stop them. Then, before they get over wondering, we can pick off the rest."

There were but five of the enemy to be seen, and as the two scouts discharged their repeating rifles, the leader and rear man fell.

The other three were too astonished to move, and soon fell victims to the skill of the scouts.

"There!" said Kelly, "I guess there are no more after us, and we might as well go back."

"Go back!" exclaimed Jehiel. "What in the Old Scratch do you want to go back for?"

"To release Gray Eagle, and get the scalp of that dusky nigger, Red Pine!"

"Why, Lew Kelly, are you crazy? If you want scalps there's five of 'em out there; though I can't see what in thunder you want with the dirty things!"

"I believe I told you I had promised Gray Eagle I would get the Sioux chief's scalp for him, and I'm going to do it, or lose my own."

"Cor-reck! You ain't in such a hurry to get home as you was, are you, Lew?"

"Yes, I am just as anxious as ever, but I have pledged my word, and you know I never lie. More than that, I consider that if we can secure the friendship of the Blackfeet at so small a cost, I shall be doing the country a good service. So I shall make a desperate effort to get the scalp of the Sioux chief, and—perhaps lose my own in trying."

"Wal, wherever you go, you can depend on yours truly, Jehiel Filkins!"

"Thank you. But I want you to go the other way," replied the scout.

"Which other way?"

"I want you to find the trail of Snowdrop, and follow it until you find her. I more than half suspect that Red Pine started some of his fellows on *her* trail when he found she was not with you, and they may have overtaken her."

"Where did you say she had gone?" asked Jehiel.

"Home. I sent her after some Blackfoot warriors, because I thought the Sioux would be after us before we could reach the village of Gray Eagle; and you see I guessed right."

"What made you think so?"

"Because she is what he came for, and he will use every effort to get her."

"Wal, I'll go. But, Lew, I'd jest like to ax you one question. Is Snowdrop in love with you?"

"Yes," replied Kelly, "at least she said she was, and that was the reason she came back after you got started last night."

"Then my bread is all dough," said Jehiel; "but I'll go all the same, seein' as how you asked me to."

"What makes you say your bread is all dough?" asked Kelly.

"'Cause you said she was in love with you."

"That does not make any difference," replied the scout. "I am not in love with her, by a long shot, and what is more I am not liable to be, while I have such a good little wife of my own living."

"Does she know you are married?"

"She ought to," replied Kelly, "for I have told her once or twice."

"Wal, I'll go, as I said afore; but, Lew, do you s'pose there is any airthly chance for me?"

"I don't know, I am sure," replied Kelly; "but you can try, and I will do all I can to help you. Remember, faint heart never won fair lady. And now, hurry up and get started, for Snowdrop may even now be in the hands of the Sioux."

"Where'll I find you when I get back?"

"I don't know, Jehiel; I shall stay around here and keep watch for the Sioux, for I am certain they are waiting to get Snowdrop before they go home."

"What makes you so sartin?" asked Jehiel.

"In the first place, this is Blackfoot country, and not Sioux, and we are not more than thirty miles from the village of the Gray Eagle. In the next place, Red Pine would have burned

me before this, if he thought he could not get Snow-

I am not here, you will find a letter in this clump that will tell you where I am gone."

take good keer of yourself, and I will find the gal

"

So saying, Jehiel started upon his errand, while the scout prepared to dog the Sioux.

CHAPTER V.

TRAILING A TRAIL.

SNOWDROP, after she had left the scout, was obliged to ride very slowly until she was over the rough hills, but after she had reached the open prairie she increased the speed of her horse.

She was a fearless rider, but the long, treeless plain which lay stretched out before her wore a dreary aspect, well calculated to discourage her.

But her mission was one of life or death to her, and she undertook the task.

The sun was just rising as she entered the plains, and putting her tough pony to the run, she dashed ahead. She was doing all this for what? Not for herself, for she would have preferred to remain with the scout; nor yet for her father, for she did not think Red Pine would spare him so long; but she was going just because the man she loved had asked her to go!

Onward the brave girl urged her horse until the sun was nearly overhead, still no signs of the Sioux. She paused a moment to allow her horse a breathing-spell, and while resting she discovered a party of horsemen on her trail, and though they were a long ways off, she knew by the way in which they rode that they had a definite object, and that that object was herself.

She was convinced that a long and tiresome race was before her; and, having been reared to a life of peril and strategy, she allowed her horse a long rest, that he might the better stand the race.

She displayed her good sense by removing the saddle from the horse, and now, armed only with a small rifle, she sprung upon his back and put him to his best speed.

On the brave girl rode—on, over the treeless and trackless waste, and only at long intervals did a roll in the prairie obstruct her view of her pursuers. At length she came to a

small stream running at right angles with the path she was pursuing, and here she paused again to allow her horse to drink.

The advancing party, whoever they were, gained rapidly upon her, until she could now count their number. There were twenty of them, all well mounted, and by the manner in which they rode, she was no longer in doubt as to their object.

Far ahead she saw a long, dark line of timber, just beyond which, she knew, was the village of her people, and she thought if she could only gain that, she would be safe; and she resolved to gain the shelter of the forest, or die in the attempt.

Slowly but surely her pursuers gained upon her, and she could now hear their yells. The sound maddened her, and the very thought of failure made her heart sick; but she lashed her horse to renewed and desperate efforts.

Her horse, too, seemed to partake of the same fear and feelings as his mistress. A few rods more and she will be among the trees where she trusted she could elude her pursuers.

Vain hope! Just as the goal is won her horse falls, and the blood flowing from his dilated nostrils shows that he has ruptured a blood-vessel. A shrill yell of triumph comes from her pursuers, yet standing firm beside her dead horse, the brave Indian girl brings her rifle to bear upon them.

Never did a stricken buck turn more fiercely at bay upon the dogs on its track, than did Snowdrop when she found that she could not escape.

With Spartan firmness she held the short rifle, and when she thought they were near enough, pulled the trigger, and the foremost Indian fell from his saddle. She had not time to reload her rifle, but clubbing it, she awaited the approach of the Sioux.

Short time was given her for thought, and she was almost immediately surrounded and overpowered, but not until a brawny warrior had been made to bite the dust at her feet.

She was lifted to the saddle made vacant by her shot, and the young brave who seemed to be the leader took her bridle-rein, and they turned to retrace their way across the prairie.

"Do you speak the language of the pale faces?" asked the warrior.

"Yes," answered Snowdrop.

"Then tell me who you are, and what tribe you belong to."

"I am called Snowdrop, and my father is Gray Eagle, the great chief of the Blackfeet."

"The White Wolf of the Pawnees has heard of Snowdrop before," he said.

"Are you White Wolf?" she asked.

"So I am called by both red men and white!" he replied.

"I have heard that White Wolf was a brave chief. If it is true, he will not make war on a woman!"

"No. Snowdrop need not fear! White Wolf already loves her and will make her his wife, for she is more beautiful than any woman of the Pawnee tribe!"

"But Snowdrop loves another, and can not go to the lodge of White Wolf, though he is a great brave and all the tribes fear him."

"White Wolf is in no hurry, and Snowdrop will learn to love him. We will wait till we get to the village of the Pawnees, and then when White Wolf asks her to be his wife she will say yes!"

"No, she will not; but if White Wolf loves Snowdrop, as he says he does, then let him go and rescue her father from the hands of the Sioux, for if he should die, then Snowdrop will die, too!"

"White Wolf will rescue Gray Eagle. Will Snowdrop tell him where her father is?"

"In the forest beyond the big hills which I left when the sun rose."

"White Wolf will go there, and he will take Gray Eagle from the cowardly Sioux, and when Snowdrop sees her father safe, then she will consent to be the wife of the Pawnee chief."

Snowdrop did not promise that she would, neither did she say that she would not; nor yet did she dare to tell him that the two scouts were doing what he was trying to do.

She acted wisely and kept silence, which White Wolf construed in his favor, and he said:

"We will go to our camp to the south, where I have a good place to leave Snowdrop in safety, then White Wolf will

go on the trail of the Sioux. He will find them, and will bring the father of Snowdrop away with him!"

"Let Snowdrop ride back with the Pawnee braves," she said.

"No," replied White Wolf; "the Pawnees will ride fast, and Snowdrop is too tired. She must go to the camp of White Wolf, and stay until he brings her father to her."

Snowdrop did not repeat her request, for she knew that it would do no good, and that it would be a mere waste of words for her to do so. She bowed her head in submission, and soon saw all but two of the Pawnees start toward the west. The remaining two placed themselves upon each side of her horse, and one of them taking her bridle-rein, they started for the south.

When Jehiel took the trail of Snowdrop it was without much hope of overtaking her, for he knew that the brave girl would ride fast when she knew there was so much at stake, and she had a long ways the start of him.

But he was better mounted than she, and had no difficulty in finding and following her trail, and before noon he had her in sight.

He saw the party of horsemen come from the south and start in pursuit of her, and by the aid of a powerful field-glass he saw her capture and the manner in which she was disposed of, though he could not tell what tribe had done it.

He saw when the party of which Snowdrop was one, left the main body and started south, and he also saw the main body riding swiftly over the back track.

He turned his horse to the right, and when the larger party had arrived at the place where he left the trail, he was but a few miles away, and it was with a grunt of satisfaction that he saw them pass on and ride away toward the hills where he had left the scout.

Jehiel waited very patiently until they had passed out of sight, then he found the trail of the party who had charge of Snowdrop, and he started after her.

"Them fellers what has my gal will be mighty apt to meet with an adventure afore mornin', or my name ain't

Jehiel Filkins. Gosh! but I wish I had the sweet critter in my arms this minnit! Wonder what Jemima Brown will say when she hears I am married to jest the prettiest little girl in America? Sartain, I hain't axed her yet, but I don't reckon she would refuse such a good-looking fellow as me."

He was thus soliloquizing as he reached the woods, and where he stopped. Finding a good place for his horse, he resumed his way on foot.

It was now nearly dark, and he was obliged to proceed cautiously, imagining that the Indians might have seen him following after them.

Leaving the beaten trail he carefully worked his way through the bushes, pausing occasionally to listen. No sound of falling hoofs was to be heard, and he again crept on.

Proceeding in this manner for about half a mile he discovered the glimmer of a camp-fire between the trees.

In the small opening three tired horses were leisurely feeding, while the Indians were busily engaged in building a fire and preparing their supper.

Snowdrop was sitting behind a tree with her hands and feet securely bound, and an expression of deep anxiety upon her face.

As Jehiel gazed at the group, he thought how easy it would be to shoot the two Indians, but he was not one to shed blood unnecessarily, and he determined to wait. He must contrive some way to let the girl know of his presence, but the question of how was a hard one to solve.

The trees surrounding the little camp were large, and the space open, so that he could advance no nearer without betraying his presence.

He solved the problem in his own quaint way. Depositing his rifle at the foot of the tree beside which he stood, he began to climb the tree. Once among the branches, the foliage of which he found dense enough for his purpose, he had no difficulty in making his way to the next nearest tree.

Creeping along the branches as stealthily as a panther, he passed from one tree to another until he found himself at the

side of the opening, and directly opposite the tree near which Snowdrop was seated.

He was in imminent danger of being discovered, but with an intrepidity peculiar to the brave scout, he set about arranging his plans for the future.

CHAPTER VI.

THE OLD MAN OF THE MOUNTAIN.

WHEN Kelly was left alone after Jehiel had started in pursuit of Snowdrop, he dismounted from his horse, and at a signal from him the sagacious animal lay down upon the ground, and Kelly proceeded to take his rest.

With his rifle beside him, his head pillowed upon the neck of the noble brute, he was soon in the realm of dreams. His sleep was long and deep, for the scout was very tired, and he did not awake until long after dark. Then the uneasy actions of his horse aroused him, and the motion of his ears, when the scout partially raised up, showed that he had heard some suspicious sounds; and Kelly felt confident that whatever the danger was it was very near, for the animal lay quite still, with his ears pointed forward in the attitude of intense apprehension.

The scout silently drew back the hammer of his rifle, and felt in his belt to see that his knife and revolvers were in their accustomed place.

Silence reigned for a few minutes, as deep as though no living thing was within miles of there.

Then Kelly heard some peculiar sounds—very slight at first, but plain and distinct. He recognized the sounds as being produced by the feet of human beings, and he knew that at least two persons were coming directly toward his hiding place.

The scout did not move, neither did the noble black horse beside him. Both seemed instinctively to know that Indians were about, and the scout thought it more than pro-

bable that it was a part of the Sioux band who were trying to find him and Jehiel.

He kept still also because he thought that by so doing the Indians might pass by without noticing him.

The sound of falling footsteps came nearer and nearer, and the brave scout could see that they were moving with great caution. And they were coming straight toward him, and so close were they that Kelly imagined they might hear the beating of his heart.

His rifle was already cocked, and he now brought it to his shoulder, resolving to use it should his presence be discovered or necessity require.

"Listen," said a strange voice in unmistakable English, "I thought I heard something!" and another voice responded—"Yes, I heard the breaking of a twig;" and Kelly recognized the last as the voice of a woman.

"I wonder if it can be Jehiel and Snowdrop?" he soliloquized, but he could not tell whether the woman was white or red.

Whoever it was they kept perfectly still, evidently listening for a repetition of the sounds; and although the silence was of only a minute's duration it seemed an hour to the scout.

Again he heard them moving along, and they were now within a few feet of him, when Kelly, in a low, firm voice, said: "Halt!" As the steps ceased he continued—"Who comes there?"

"A white man, and an enemy to none but Indians!" was the reply.

Kelly recognized the voice of the speaker, and exclaimed:

"Gracious! is that you, Curtiss? Come on—but who have you got there?"

"I do not know what her name is, or where she came from; but I do know that she has done a good job for me, that I will not soon forget. She crept to my side about an hour ago, and cut the thongs with which I was bound to a tree, and probably saved me from getting roasted."

Then the scout looked at her as well as he could in the dim light, but she did not speak.

"She is no Blackfoot," he said, "and she is too good

looking for a Sioux. Tell you what it is, Curtiss, I believe she is a white girl! How is it, girl, can you speak the language of the pale-faces?"

"Yes," replied a low, sweet voice, "I am Nu-le-la, the sister of Red Pine, the Sioux chief.

"The dickens, you are! Well, Curtiss, you and I are in luck, no matter who the young lady is. But, if she is a Sioux we will have to keep her close, or she will betray us to her brother. There will be a loud rumpus when they find out you are gone."

"Just listen! They have found it out already," said the Indian girl. "Let us leave here, for Red Pine will have a hundred braves upon our path as soon as the light comes, and he can be cruel when he chooses!" Loud yells could now be heard far down in the valley.

"Did you conceal your trail when you came here?" the scout asked of Curtiss.

"No," he replied, "we came as fast as we could, and had but one thought—that was to get away as fast as possible."

"Then they will have no trouble in following your trail when daylight comes, so the best thing we can do is to get out of here as soon as possible. I found a cave one day when I was out hunting, and not far from here. If I can only find it again, we will be all right. We have a few hours the start of them, so I guess we can find shelter before they can find us. Come on, now, and be sure and keep in a line directly behind me," said Kelly, as he entered the stream leading his horse. "And another thing," he continued, "you must be careful and not break any of the bushes along the bank, nor leave a footprint in the sand!"

And leading his pet horse he led the way up the stream.

When the stream became too narrow for the scout and his horse to walk abreast, he led the way, the faithful black following him, and Curtiss with the Sioux maiden bringing up the rear.

The current of the stream was swift, and whatever footprints were made were quickly washed full of sand and stones; and half an hour after no trace could be found in the bed of the stream, of those who so recently had passed

through. They could hear the angry yells of the Sioux far down the valley, and they pressed on without halting.

The stream now came through a narrow defile with huge rocks towering perpendicularly upon either side; then having gone a few rods further, the scout halted.

"This looks very much like a trap!" said Curtiss.

"Well, yes," replied the scout. "It would be a trap if the Sioux only knew we were here. But they don't know it and this is not the place I proposed for us to roost in. Follow me a little longer." So saying, he led the way a few feet further, then turning abruptly to the right, disappeared in what seemed to Curtiss to be solid rock.

Presently the voice of the scout was heard:

"Why don't you come in? 'Walk into my parlor, said the spider to the fly,'" he sung, as Curtiss and the Indian girl entered the fissure in the rocks through which the brave scout had disappeared with his horse.

They found themselves within a large cave, thirty or forty feet in length, and perhaps half that distance in width. The floor was as smooth as could be wished for, while the room was high enough for all purposes.

"How do you like this?" asked Kelly. "Here is room enough and to spare, and no one can find the entrance unless they come up the stream as we did; and even if they should, we could defend ourselves against the whole Sioux nation!" He at once led his horse to the further end of the cave, and returned to the opening.

It was now daylight, and he took the opportunity to have another look at the Indian girl.

"Great Cæsar! But you are pretty," he said, as his eyes met those of the maiden.

"If this pale-face will only think so," she replied, pointing to Curtiss, "I shall be very happy!"

"Well, if he don't make you happy, I shall be tempted to punish him in some way!" said the scout.

"No, not that," answered the girl. "I saved him from torture, and now he is mine—yes, all mine forever!" said the impulsive girl, and she threw her arms round the white man's neck.

"There is no doubt but what the girl is in love," said the

scout to himself, "and, as matters stand just now, I don't know but what it is the best thing that could happen for me, and it certainly is for him." Then he added, aloud—"If you and Nulela will remain here with old Pet, I will climb to the top of this rock and see if I can discover what the Sioux are about."

"All right," replied Curtiss—"we will wait here for you. But do not expose yourself unnecessarily, Kelly."

"I am not in the habit of doing that," answered the scout "but let me advise you to keep on good terms with the girl. The more you can talk love to her, the better it will be for us, because if you make her angry she would not stop short of putting you again in the hands of her brother."

Proceeding down the stream a short distance, the scout came to a place where he could climb to the top of the rock.

Arriving there, he hurried to the end overlooking the valley, whence he could get a good view of the plains and the valley below him.

Away off, as far as the eye could reach, he saw straggling parties of Indians moving about, as if endeavoring to find the trail of the escaped prisoner.

Some of them were very near the foot of the hill upon which he stood, but the scout was satisfied that they had not yet found the trail.

There was one thing, however, which seemed somewhat singular to the scout. He noticed that a large addition had been made to their force. But it was soon made plain to him.

He saw large parties coming from the north, and knew that they were not all Sioux who were there, but that the Blackfoot braves had come to answer the call of Gray Eagle made by the smoke signals, which the scout had sent up for the old chief.

"By Jingo!" he muttered, "I wish I could be down there to help one side or the other; but then, where is the difference? It is only dog eat dog after all, and they can fight it out without my assistance. Wish I only knew whether Jehiel is in the scrimmage or not? Reckon not, though, for he has not had time to go to the Blackfoot village and back. Wonder where the dickens he is, anyhow?"

But no answer came to any of the scout's queries, and the gnawings of hunger brought him back to his senses.

In a few minutes a drove of mountain sheep were discovered, slowly feeding toward him, and drawing his revolver he waited until they were near enough, and shot one. Shouldering his meat, he retraced his steps toward the ravine, only pausing once on the way to secure an armful of dry wood. He then descended to the stream, and once more presented himself before the group in the cavern.

"All right, here?" he asked, as he entered and deposited his armful of wood and meat upon the floor.

"Yes; all right!" replied Curtiss. "Did you learn anything of our Indian friends, down in the valley?"

"Not much," replied the scout. "They seem to be having lively times down there, but I don't know as it is any thing that can interest us as much as a good roast of this mutton will, so I propose that we eat now. After breakfast I will take another look at them."

While they were yet eating their breakfast they were saluted by a strange voice, shouting:

"Hello! Who in thunder has tuck possession uv my domicil?"

They all sprung to their feet, and, grasping their weapons, stood ready to receive the new-comer, whoever he might be.

"Put up yer shooters, yer little nubbins; I won't hurt yer, seein' 'at yer mostly white," and as they did so the stranger advanced to the fire.

He was, to all appearances, an aged man, as his hair and beard, which were both long and flowing, were as white as the driven snow; but his straight, athletic form belied his age.

His dress and arms were such as are usually worn by the mountain trapper, though he wore one very singular ornament. This was no less than a necklace, consisting of a double row of bear-claws.

This, the reader will understand, if he is conversant with Indian character, was a badge of distinguished bravery, and one of which any hunter might well be proud.

The stranger stood before the fire, silently regarding them

for several minutes, then he broke out—"Why don't yer say suthin? Yer a doggoned purty set, to come inter a feller's house in this way, without even askin' the owner. Ef I was a leetle better 'quainted I'd take yer 'cross my knee an' spank ther hull caboodle uv yer!"

"I was not aware, sir," said the scout, "that we were intruding on any man's domain. I accidentally discovered this about a week ago, and made use of it this morning in effecting our escape from a party of Sioux who were on our trail."

"Sioux? Ther devil! Ther' ain't a Sioux in ther kentry what dare kem' a nigh here!" exclaimed the stranger.

"But," replied Kelly, "there are Sioux within a very short distance of here, as you can see for yourself if you will go to the top of the bluff."

"Wal, yer needu't bother yerselves any further. I've l'arnt 'em to respect old Bear-Paw, as they calls me; an' now ef yer a mind ter kem with me, I'll show yer a better place nor this."

He led the way to the further extremity of the cavern, and halted before the solid wall.

At his feet were a number of small stones, one of which he took in his hand and struck the wall before him three times.

The astonishment of the scout and his friends can not be imagined as they saw the rock slowly recede before them and swing noiselessly back. They followed their leader through the aperture, the huge rock swung back to its former position, and they discovered a room nearly twice as large as the one they had just left.

At one side a brisk fire was burning, and over this an old negro woman was cooking a savory venison ham. Piles of fur were lying around, indicating that their host was a trapper.

"Here we ar'," said the old man; "an' here I have lived fur nigh onto ten year. Thar's wood enuf an' pervison enuf ter stan' a ten year siege, an' now ef ye'll jes' tell me what the trouble ar' an' all about it then mebby I kin tell yer what ter do."

Thereupon Kelly proceeded to relate all that had transpired up to this time; and there we must leave them for awhile and look after the fortunes of others.

CHAPTER VII.

JEHIEL'S WOOING.

AFTER Jehiel had gained a position to suit him, his first endeavor was to let Snowdrop know that he was there, and to make her aware of his intentions.

But the question then arose how this was to be accomplished.

Like nearly all border men, Jehiel could imitate perfectly the beasts of the field and the birds of the air, and he now resolved to make good use of the power he possessed to attract her attention.

The whirring sound made by the sudden swoop of the night-hawk fell upon the air, but no notice was made of it.

He was within short pistol-shot of the Indians; indeed he could smell the savory steaks as they were broiling upon the coals, and he knew that a discovery would result in instant death, and the fact affected him in any thing but a pleasant manner.

Then he chirped like a wren, but no more attention was paid to that than to the whir of the night-hawk.

This was followed by the dull *too-hoot* of an owl, and the long, mocking note of the cat-bird.

They were all too common sounds. Neither the Indians nor Snowdrop paid the least attention to what they had been accustomed to hear every day and night of their lives.

Jehiel now gave a good imitation of the crow, and as the ringing *caw, caw*, sounded through the forest, the Indians merely looked up at the clouds to see if there were any indications of rain, and proceeded with their meal.

Jehiel did not despair, even though his efforts thus far had failed to attract the attention of the Indian maiden.

"Thunder!" he muttered, "where is the use in whistling when she won't even look up!"

Reaching up among the foliage his hand came in contact with a bunch of acorns, one of which he pulled off, and parting the leaves in front of him, he threw the acorn at Snowdrop. It hit her upon the hand, and startled her from her gloomy reverie. She looked up at the tree above her head, and not in the direction of the scout, but not seeing any thing, she concluded that the wind had likely dislodged the acorn, and again bent her head in contemplation.

Again Jehiel threw an acorn, and again she looked up and around, and at last her eyes rested upon the opening in the foliage of the huge oak opposite where she sat. She suppressed the cry of surprise which rose to her lips, and Jehiel noticed that the Indians did not pause in their work; so he made the opening larger.

Snowdrop was now looking attentively at him—her form was motionless—not a feature relaxed, but the glad look in her eyes told Jehiel that he was at last seen and recognized.

He bent down his head and placed it in the palm of his hand, then put his fingers on his eyes. This was to signify that he would come and help her when the Indians were asleep.

She answered him in precisely the same way, then made a quick motion with her hand toward the two Indians, as if to tell him that she fully understood him.

Jehiel then held up two fingers of one hand and made an undulating motion with them, to signify that he had horses, and that they would ride away after the Indians were asleep; and then drew back to the body of the tree to watch and wait.

He now endeavored to familiarize himself with the surroundings, so that he would have no trouble in getting away if he succeeded in releasing Snowdrop. He did not wish to kill the Pawnees if he could possibly help it, and thought more of outwitting them, but he had resolved to shoot them both rather than be defeated in his plans. He knew, too,

th there were no better trailers in the world than the Pawnees.

Snowdrop was as calm and stoical as if she had been at home among her own people, and gave no sign which might arouse the suspicions of her guard, and Jehiel felt like cheering her for her bravery.

"Ginger! but she's jest the gayest little squaw on earth, and there ain't a Yankee gal living could take things as cool as she does. She's as sweet as they make 'em—*she* is!"

By this time the Pawnees had finished their cooking, and one of them brought a large slice of meat to Snowdrop, who immediately commenced eating.

After she had finished the slice they asked her if she wanted more, to which she shook her head and placed her fingers upon her eyes, giving them to understand that she was sleepy. They immediately piled a lot of blankets near the fire, and untied her ankles, so that she could walk about and lie down.

It seemed a long time to Jehiel before the Indians became sleepy, but, after smoking and talking a long time, they gave up, and rolling themselves in their blankets, were soon asleep. They took the precaution, however, of tying a strip of leather about one of Snowdrop's wrists, and to their own, so that she could not move her hand without disturbing them.

Jehiel remained in the tree until he became satisfied, from the loud snoring, that the Pawnees were sound asleep; then he descended, and in a moment had cut the thongs which bound the Indian girl; and then, taking a large piece of meat from before the fire, they silently departed. Though Jehiel was very hungry, having fasted for thirty-six hours, he had no disposition to eat until he had put a safe distance between him and the Pawnees.

"Come on, little gal, and come jest as still as you can," he whispered.

A gentle pressure of his hand was the only reply, and they went on.

After going several rods, Jehiel halted to decide whether he should still further insult the Indians by going back and turning their horses loose, but a few whispered words decided in the negative.

So, closely followed by Snowdrop, he walked along to where he had left his own horse.

The faithful animal stood where he had been left, and Jehiel led him out to where he had secreted the horse of Snowdrop, and they were soon mounted. Then he took the route to the open plain, having decided to push on with Snowdrop to the village of the Blackfeet.

It was not until they were out of the forest that Jehiel spoke a loud word, but now he felt that he was out of danger, and he said:

"Little gal, you had a purty hard time on't, didn't you?"

"Yes," replied Snowdrop. "Did White Panther send you after me?"

"Wa-al, he said I could come if I wanted to, and I felt as if my heart would bu'st if I didn't, so I come."

"The Long Hunter has a good heart to take Snowdrop from the hands of the Pawnee," said the Indian girl.

"Thunder! was them Pawnees?"

"Yes," answered Snowdrop, "and their chief, White Wolf, said he was going to keep me for his squaw. But I would have killed him first."

"Bully for you—you are the rummiest little chick in America! Did you ever—that is—ahem! you didn't love him much, I reckon?"

"No. I love your friend, the White Panther, and will be his wife."

"Lord! that can't be, for White Panther, as you call him, has got a wife already," said Jehiel.

"I do not care. He is a good hunter and can feed more wives than one."

"But, gal, you don't understand. Us white folks has a law which won't allow a feller to have more than one wife at a time."

"Then that law is no good," replied Snowdrop. "Suppose there are two women and only one man—must one woman go without?"

Jehiel was getting a little mixed in his love-making, but he replied:

"In course she must! But just suppose there is one woman and two men, must one man be without a wife?"

This was a question that Snowdrop was not prepared to answer. But she said :

"I am not *white*. I love the White Panther and I do not care how many wives he has got, so long as I am the last one, and he loves me best !"

"You will be disapp'inted, my gal," was all that Jehiel could say.

Riding a little way further they came to a clump of timber, and here Jehiel resolved to stop a while and eat the meat which they had brought with them from the Indian camp.

Accordingly they dismounted, the horses at once went to feeding, and they proceeded to build a fire and cook the meat. Jehiel had not been bashful in helping himself to a large piece, and the fact that it rapidly disappeared after being roasted, was sufficient evidence that it was good. Besides, they were hungry, as an Indian or a frontiersman alway is.

They had not finished eating, when Jehiel noticed that his horse had stopped eating, and was looking in the direction from which they had come.

"There comes them cussed Pawnees, not a mile away," he said. "We must get out of here, or shed blood."

The next moment they were mounted and speeding away over the plain, satisfied from the yells of the savages who were in pursuit, that they had been already discovered. Placing one of his revolvers in the hand of Snowdrop, he said :

"If we must, we must, I suppose ; but I don't want to. You ride on ahead, and I will stop here and settle their hash for them !"

The Pawnees were within rifle-shot, and were fast gaining upon the scout and Snowdrop, who would not leave him.

On they came—nearer and still nearer—until, in an instant, Snowdrop raised her revolver and fired.

"Gosh ! gal, you made a hole clean through that critter. Now I'll fix the other one."

The remaining Pawnee had turned his horse and was leaving as fast as possible, but he could not outrun the bullet from the rifle of the scout ; so went on a visit to the happy hunting-grounds sooner than he expected or wished.

Then they turned and again started on, when a sight met them that caused the scout to halt and exclaim:

"Gewhillakens! Look at that!"

Snowdrop looked in the direction in which he pointed and saw as many as two hundred painted warriors but a short distance away, all well-mounted and apparently ready for charge.

Jehiel was in despair, but it was quickly changed to joy by the exclamation of Snowdrop.

"They are Blackfoot braves! My own people, come to look for me!"

She gave a shrill cry, which instantly changed the hostile attitude of the savages, and bidding Jehiel ride close to her, and not be afraid, she rode on to meet the war-party.

The war-party was led by a young warrior, who saluted Snowdrop, and asked:

"Who is this pale-face, and where do you come from?"

"He is the Long Hunter—the friend of White Panther. I was in the hands of the Pawnees, and he got me away," replied the girl.

"Where is the chief, Gray Eagle?"

"The Sioux have got him. I was going to the village of my people for warriors to help White Panther get him away. White Panther stayed to watch the Sioux, and keep them from burning my father."

"There are enough Blackfeet here to save your father without any help from an accursed pale-face!" exclaimed the warrior.

Snowdrop made no reply, though the flashing of her eyes betrayed the fact that the young chief was treading on dangerous ground. They continued in conversation a few minutes longer, when they were interrupted by an exclamation from Jehiel.

"Gracious airth! Jest look at that! There come the Sioux! What does it mean?"

Then Snowdrop observed them, and she saw what the scout did not, that the approaching party was led by her father.

But where was Lew Kelly?

CHAPTER VIII.

THE YANKEE ON HIS MUSCLE.

THE warriors sent out by Red Pine to capture Snowdrop had not returned to the Sioux camp, neither had those sent after the brave scout and his companion, whom he had rescued from torture; and, as might naturally be expected, the Sioux chief was getting very anxious about them.

He did not dream that every one of both parties were dead, for he had not been present to see the scout and Jehiel shoot down the five who went after them, nor did he know that those who had gone in pursuit of Snowdrop had met the party of Pawnees who had captured her, and had all been sent on a pilgrimage to the other world.

Had he known this, his anxiety would have been still greater. He seemed destined to misfortunes and disappointments at every turn, and now a new disaster had befallen him:

The morning after the rescue of Jehiel he had looked in vain for his other white prisoner, Curtiss. No one could tell where he had gone.

"Who guarded the pale-face?" he demanded.

"It was I," replied a young brave, as he stepped out before his chief.

Without a word the Sioux chief raised his hatchet, and sunk it to the eye in the brain of the warrior, who fell dead at his feet.

An old warrior approached him, and said:

"Nulela, the sister of Red Pine, is gone!"

Somehow or other he could not help connecting the sudden disappearance of his sister with the escape of the white prisoner.

"Did any one see them go?" he asked.

There was no response.

Turning to Gray Eagle, he said:

"Dog of a Blackfoot, do you know any thing of this? Speak quick, before I kill you!"

"The Sioux is very brave when he can kill a man who is hurt and bound," replied Gray Eagle. Then he continued: "I did see the Sioux girl go away with the pale-face captive."

"Which way did they go?" demanded the Red Pine.

"If the Sioux is a great brave, as he pretends to be, he can find their trail. Gray Eagle is glad they are gone!"

Red Pine gave up the task of acquiring any information from the Blackfoot chief, and at once the whole camp were searching for the fugitives. In a short time they found it and followed it to the creek, where it was lost.

Unremittingly they searched, up and down on both sides, but could find no trace after it entered the water, and after searching several hours were obliged to give it up.

Of course Red Pine was very angry when they returned to camp and announced their failure.

And now a new danger beset him.

A scout came in with the intelligence that a large party of strange Indians were approaching. Whether friendly or not, he could not tell.

Red Pine had his warriors all mounted and ready for them, should they be friends or foes. He stationed a warrior beside the old chief, Gray Eagle, with instructions to start for the country of the Sioux, should they be obliged to give battle to the strangers.

The strange Indians were soon in sight, and halted within a hundred yards. Their leader then rode to the middle of the space, and stopping, signified to Red Pine that he wanted to talk with him.

The Sioux chief rode out to meet him, alone and unarmed, as was the stranger. The stranger was the first to break silence, which he did by demanding:

"Who are you?"

"I am Red Pine—"

"A Sioux?" interrupted the first.

"Yes, a chief of the Sioux! Why do you ask?"

"Is the great chief of the Blackfeet with you?"

"Gray Eagle, the Blackfoot chief, is the prisoner of Red Pine," he answered. "But who are you that asks?"

"I am White Wolf, the great chief of the Pawnees, and I want your prisoner!"

The mention of the name, Pawnee, struck a chill to the heart of Red Pine; for it is a fact that nearly all the western Indians stand in wholesome fear of them, and would as soon meet a spirit of evil as a Pawnee. I can not say why this is so, but give it as the facts in the case.

Red Pine saw that the affair was assuming rather a formidable shape, yet he did not feel disposed to give it up so.

"Why does my brother want the Blackfoot chief?" he asked.

"White Wolf has promised to bring him to his daughter, the Snowdrop, then she is to be my wife."

"Does White Wolf know where Snowdrop is now?"

"Yes, she is in the camp of White Wolf, among the hills."

"Did the Pawnee see any of the Sioux warriors when he found her?"

"Yes," replied White Wolf, and he chuckled to himself as he continued, "they will never return to their chief!"

"Why so?" asked Red Pine.

"Because their scalps hang in the belts of my warriors, as yours will soon, if you do not give up the chief, Snowdrop's father!"

Were all the plans of Red Pine to be frustrated in this way, after he had come so far, and been to so much trouble? Were the fond hopes he had entertained when leaving the village of his people to be lost now, when they were so near realization? Must he give up the main object of his mission, and go back without the Blackfoot maiden?

Impossible! He would die first! So he said:

"Gray Eagle is my prisoner, and the Pawnee can not have him!"

Without a word White Wolf turned and rode toward his band, and Red Pine returned to his warriors.

White Wolf was a big, fat, burly Indian, who has since become quite well known on the plains as the meanest beggar of them all; one who will steal a blanket or murder a white man for the sake of a drink of whisky. He has become very much demoralized since the time we first met him, demanding the prisoner of the Sioux chief.

Red Pine is not much better, though much younger. He was never known to do an act of kindness, and was by nature cruel and vindictive. Each were, and still are, a type of their respective tribes.

Neither were disposed to wait very long. Red Pine because he was in haste to have it over, believing that he would be the victor, notwithstanding the foe with whom he had to deal was no common one. White Wolf was in hurry for the same reasons, and also because he was in haste to secure Snowdrop for a wife, as he had no doubt he would.

Both were destined to learn that disappointment is the lot of mankind.

The battle was commenced by the Pawnees discharging a shower of arrows at the Sioux. Then the Sioux returned the compliment, and thus they continued for nearly an hour, not seeming to make much headway, or to cause any very great slaughter. They did yelling enough, however, for an army of twenty thousand men, and this, by the way, is the manner of Indian fighting generally.

Usually, one party or the other will run before that time, but in this case both of the leaders had too much at stake—both wanted the Blackfoot girl.

The warrior who had been left to guard Gray Eagle had taken his captive and started off at the first round between the opposing forces.

This movement had not escaped the notice of the Pawnee chief, and he immediately started two of his warriors to intercept the Sioux, and recapture Gray Eagle. In this movement they were quite successful; the fact being that the Sioux guard deserted his prisoner as soon as he found himself pursued—believing, no doubt, that discretion was the better part of valor.

His new captors conducted Gray Eagle to a position where he could watch the progress of the battle, then one of them returned to take a part in the, thus far, bloodless war, and to inform his chief, White Wolf, of their success.

Then White Wolf resolved to strike his death-blow, and giving the order to charge, they swept down upon the Sioux, and a hand-to-hand fight ensued.

But it was of short duration, for the Sioux soon broke and fled for their lives.

The Pawnees did not pursue them very far, as they had secured what they came after, and were now ready to return to their camp.

Gray Eagle was not very well pleased when he learned into whose hands he had now fallen, for he, too, dreaded the Pawnees.

White Wolf saluted his prisoner kindly and said :

"I have rescued Gray Eagle from the hands of the Sioux squaws, and when Snowdrop sees him safe she will consent to be the wife of White Wolf."

"Does the chief know where Snowdrop is?" asked the chief.

"In the camp of White Wolf, a day's ride from here," was the reply.

"How came she there?" demanded the old chief.

"White Wolf found her upon the big plain toward the village of the Blackfeet. Let us go."

Gray Eagle knew the utter uselessness of arguing the question with the Pawnee chief, and bowing his head they rode away.

The Pawnees had discovered the party of Blackfeet at the same time that Jehiel had done so, and just now it occurred to White Wolf that he was in rather a disagreeable situation. He saw that the party of Blackfeet outnumbered his party, five to one, and he knew that they were brave warriors and would not run as easily as the Sioux had done.

Gray Eagle was pleased at the turn in affairs, as would naturally be expected; but when he saw that Snowdrop was one of the approaching party, he turned to White Wolf and said :

"Does my brother speak with a forked tongue?"

"No," replied the Pawnee; "who dare say he does?"

"He said that the daughter of Gray Eagle was in the camp of White Wolf, a day's ride from here. Now Gray Eagle sees her there with his people!"

White Wolf did not know what to say. He had left the Blackfoot beauty a prisoner in the hands of two trusty war

riors, and for the life of him he could not imagine who had rescued her. He said:

"Shall there be peace between the Pawnee and Blackfeet braves, or shall White Wolf take the scalp of Gray Eagle and go away?"

The old Blackfoot chief saw that there was much to gain and nothing to lose, and he replied:

"There shall be peace." And they again moved on.

The young chief who led the party of Blackfeet accompanied by Snowdrop and Jehiel, now rode forward, leaving the Blackfeet in a body; while Gray Eagle and White Wolf rode out to meet them.

"Has the Blackfoot maiden a sister who looks just like herself?" asked the astonished Pawnee.

"No, Snowdrop has no sister," replied the girl. "I see you thought I was your prisoner. I was, but I did not stay so very long."

"How did you get away?" asked White Wolf.

"I rode away! Your warriors slept too sound, you see."

"Waugh!" was all White Wolf could say. He knew that Snowdrop was merely trying to banter him, and after a moment's reflection, he said:

"The warriors shall die! They are not fit to live if they can not keep one little squaw!"

"No, they will not die!" assented Snowdrop.

The chief looked at her in surprise. He was not in the habit of having squaws contradict his word.

"White Wolf is his own master, and the chief of all the Pawnees! Why does the Blackfoot maiden say they shall not die?"

"Because they are dead already!" answered Snowdrop.

"Dead! Who killed them?"

"I killed one; Long Hunter the other," she replied.

White Wolf glared fiercely at her, as if he could kill her where she sat, but in a few moments the expression changed, and he said:

"I have rescued your father from the hands of the Sioux as I promised; now will Snowdrop go to the home of White Wolf, and be his squaw? She shall have as many slaves

as she wants, and there shall be peace between the tribes. What says the queen of the Blackfeet?"

"That she does not love the great chief of the Pawnees, and can never enter his lodge," replied Snowdrop.

"Does she love some one else?"

"Yes, Snowdrop will be the wife of White Panther or marry no one!"

"Who is the White Panther?" asked the chief.

"He is the bravest of pale-faces, and Snowdrop will give her life to him!"

"Tell me where he is, that I may go and kill him. He is a dog!"

Hardly had the words escaped his lips before he received a blow upon the side of his head which knocked him from his horse, and laid him senseless upon the ground.

"There, ye everlastin' skunk!" exclaimed Jehiel, for it was he had administered the blow, "that'll l'arn ye not to be callin' names!"

The Pawnees seized their weapons when they saw their chief go to the ground, but at the motion, the Sioux also put themselves in readiness to repel any attack.

Slowly the Pawnee chief rose to his feet, and for a moment he seemed to be measuring the strength of Jehiel, then his smothered indignation found vent, and he exclaimed:

"The pale-face shall die!"

"Waal, he won't, unless he runs across a smarter red-skin than you are!" exclaimed Jehiel.

"If he is not a coward he will fight the great chief of the Pawnees, and White Wolf will surely kill him!" said the chief.

"Waal, I may be a coward, but I ain't afeard of you nor any other durned Injun in this kentry. An' durn yer skin, I'll fight ye any day and place ye dare to mention!"

"Then we will fight now and here," said the chief.

"Agreed! You'll see fair play, won't you?" he asked of Gray Eagle.

"Yes," replied the chief. "If White Wolf kills my friend, he must do it fairly."

"Bully for you, old feller!" said Jehiel. Then turning to White Wolf, he said:

"Now, ye red serpent, jes' git off there; an' when the old chief gives the word, we will see who can shoot the best."

"No," replied the Indian, "the gun of the pale-face is better than that of White Wolf. Let us fight with knives."

"Not much, you don't!" exclaimed Jehiel, who was not very skillful in the use of that implement, "not much, you don't. I don't want to dirty my knife—it's the one I use to cut my meat with, and it would go ag'in' my stomach to use it arter I'd cut a dirty Injun to pieces!"

"Then let the chief of the Blackfeet say how the fight shall be," said White Wolf.

"Agreed, ag'in! Crack ahead chief, and any way you say fight, I'll fight!"

"Gray Eagle says, let the fight be with knives and on foot," was the decision of the chief; and although it did not exactly suit Jehiel, he immediately began to strip for the fight.

He was soon naked to the waist, and handing his gun and garments to Snowdrop, he asked her to hold them for him. He was encouraged by a sweet smile from her, and in reply to the whispered, "Kill him if you can," he replied:

"I'll do it, sartin!"

White Wolf then stripped, and he too handed his gun to Snowdrop, but she refused it with scorn. This angered the Pawnee still more, and he exclaimed:

"Wait until I kill the pale-face dog!" and he strode into the circle which had been formed by the two parties pressing forward in their eagerness to see what was going on.

White Wolf was a tall, finely formed Indian, and was well skilled in the use of the knife, so that really, he had the advantage over Jehiel; but what Jehiel lacked in skill and experience, he more than made up in quickness and grit.

They stood within six feet of each other, waiting for Gray Eagle to give the signal to commence.

Soon it came, and as the two forms met, the gleaming steel told that the battle was begun. Flashing in the sunlight, as the antagonists came together, and then sprung apart, only to renew the conflict without a moment's pause.

Jehiel soon became satisfied that he was in no particular danger from the Pawnee chief, and he laughed to himself as he parried the furious blows of the Indian. But he soon grew tired of this, and pressed hard upon his adversary, who gradually fell back toward the side of the circle occupied by his warriors.

Jehiel anticipated his intentions, and springing past the Pawnee, placed himself between the chief and his warriors.

Then he pressed the Pawnee still harder, and began to nerve himself for the last desperate effort.

By a skillful blow he severed the string by which the knife of the chief was attached to his wrist, and another lightning-like stroke sent the Indian's knife whirling a rod away.

"Now, red-skin, if you hain't satisfied, go and pick up your knife and I'll do it again."

"The pale-face can take the scalp of White Wolf, for he has won it!" replied the chief.

"I don't want yer scalp, ye durned fool, but I guess, seein' it's you, I'll cut it off close to yer head; then, while you're raisin' another one, you can think of the lickin' I've g'in ye."

"White Wolf will not accept life from a pale-face dog!" exclaimed the chief.

Again the sledge-hammer fist of Jehiel came in contact with the head of the Pawnee, and again the chief found himself flat on his back.

"Waal, now, didn't I tell you so?" said Jehiel. "I don't take *dog* from no man, let alone a durned Injun."

Then Jehiel shaved the braided scalp-lock of the Pawnee chief close to his head, after which he returned, and donning his garments, mounted his horse and was ready for the next thing that might turn up.

White Wolf was not slow in following his example, and then withdrew with his warriors, without saying a word to any one.

CHAPTER IX.

BEAR-PAW AT HOME.

THE party at the cave were enjoying themselves as well as they could under the circumstances.

Kelly was getting anxious about his friend Jehiel, and had resolved that, if he did not make his appearance in the vicinity that day, he would go in search of him next morning.

But he did not know that about that time Jehiel was having his little round with the Pawnee chief—if he had, he would not have rested quite so easily.

Then there was his promise to Gray Eagle, which was only half kept, but which he resolved should be fulfilled to the letter.

Yes, he *would* have the scalp of the Sioux chief, or die in the attempt to get it.

Nulela, the sister of Red Pine, was indeed happy, and with good reason—the white man whom she had rescued from her brother's power now reciprocated her great love, and she felt herself amply rewarded for the risk she had run and the sacrifice she had made.

Full well she knew that she could not return to her own people, except in disgrace. Such is the moral code of the Sioux—if a maiden of the tribe marries a white man, and he dies, or, as is more generally the case, deserts her, she is thenceforth an outcast.

For a long time after the old trapper had tendered them the hospitalities of his subterranean retreat, they sat beside the fire trying to determine what was best to be done.

"I am afraid that the Sioux will hang around here until they find out some way to get into this cave," said Curtiss.

"Young man," said the old trapper, "it ar' a great pity yer could not hev been born with more brains, an' less stomach!"

"What do you mean, sir?" exclaimed the astonished young man.

"I mean yer must be a durned fool fur bein' afraid, when I've told yer thar ain't a mite o' danger in here!"

Curtiss thought his best plan was to humor the eccentricities of Old Bear-Paw, and it was perhaps well that he did.

"Kem with me, my friends," said the trapper, "an' I'll convince yer we ar' perfectly safe."

He led the way to the further end of the cave, where the party found themselves standing upon the brink of a fearful chasm, the light from the torches revealing no boundary except that upon which they stood. Below and beyond them, all was inky blackness.

"Gracious, what a place!" said Kelly. "Do you know how deep this hole is, or what is on the other side?"

"Yas. I've bin down inter this 'ar' hole clean ter ther bottom, an' ef yer behave yerselves purty well, I'll take yer down thar with me, one of these days."

"Thank you," replied the scout; "but do you know what is on the other side of here?"

"Sartin, I've bin thar too! Would yer like ter go over? I've got er menagery over thar, as ther show fellers used ter say, uv ther finest livin' specimens on ther contynunt!"

"But how do you get across?—I can't see. Two steps more and down you go, into that bottomless pit. It is not possible that you can walk on air, and there is no way of making a bridge, that I can see."

"Yer see, I ain't lived here ten years fur nothin'—so now I'll show yer how it's done."

He stepped to one side and returned holding in his hand the end of a rope, the other end of which was lost in the darkness above them.

"Now yer see," said the old man, "yer jest hang on ter this yer end, an swing off. Wull, ther swing 'll take yer clear across this yer black hole—then when yer feel yerself comin' back, all yer hev ter do is ter drap yer feet down, an' ye'll find yerself on terry furmy onc't more. Then yer kin throw ther rope back fur ther next feller, ef thar is any more, an' ef thar ain't yer must hang it up on ther peg at ther side—'cause ef yer don't it will hang straight down ther

middle arter it gits done swinging. Then thar can't no one git it."

"Yes, I understand. Now, Mr.—"

"Bear-Paw, I told yer, only leave off ther mister!"

"Well, Bear-Paw, supposing you take your torch and go across, then we will follow you."

The old trapper took the torch between his teeth and seizing the rope with both hands, he swung off. In a minute he waved his torch on the other side, and shouted—"Ketch ther rope," and in another minute Kelly was ready to follow.

He tried the rope, as if to make sure that it would hold his weight, never considering that a much larger man had just swung on the same rope; and it was with a sensation that he had never before experienced, that he grasped it firmly and swung off. He soon found himself beside the old trapper, who said:

"Yer done it well, boy! But I'm afeard that booby over thar won't dare ter try it!"

He shouted to Curtiss to catch the rope, and again it went to the other side and was caught by him.

"You go first, Nulela," said Curtiss.

"No, Nulela will follow her chief!"

"Are you sure you can hang on?"

"Nulela is not a child," she replied. "But is the white chief afraid?"

"Oh, no! But what should I do if you were to fall? It would be instant death!"

"Does my chief then care for me?"

"Care for you? Yes, little one—I love you!" he answered.

"Oh! I am so glad!" exclaimed the Indian girl; "then I can go with you, and be your wife?"

"Yes," replied Curtiss, "if we ever get out of here."

A call from both Kelly and the old trapper to "hurry up," put a stop to their love-making, and Curtiss took a firm hold upon the rope and started for the other side. He had barely regained his feet when the old trapper seized the rope and sprung out, leaving the scout and Curtiss alone on the brink of the chasm.

Their first thought was of treachery. Could it be possible that the old man was about to leave them there as the easiest and surest way of getting rid of them?

They surmised all sorts of things—probable and improbable. They saw him land on the other side. Here he said to the Indian girl:

"Jest wait a minit till I git some more torches."

Then he put the rope into her hand to hold until he should return. Presently he came back with a lighted torch in his hand, and several more stuck in his belt.

"Now, gal, we'll jine our friends on ther other side."

He held his torch up to her face, to see if she exhibited any signs of fear, but though he saw no such expression, he saw what puzzled him more—he saw that her eyes were blue.

"Girl, who are you? Certainly you are no Indian!" he exclaimed, in language entirely different from that he generally used.

"I am Nulela, the sister of Red Pine," she answered.

He looked at her a moment, as if trying to recollect some half-forgotten event, and bowing his head upon his hands, the strong man wept.

"Can it be that I have found my lost one?" he murmured. "My God! If it should be true, what a joyful ending there would be to all these years of sorrow and heart-ache! But no, it can not be! *She* was stolen by the fierce Apaches, and this one—ha! where is she?"

During his soliloquy the Indian girl had swung off and was now standing beside her friends on the other side of the chasm, and the voice of Kelly was heard shouting:

"Here comes the rope, Bear-Paw, catch it!"

A moment later and the old man stood beside them.

"Wull," he said, "yer kem acrost all right, didn't yer? An' now we'll go an' see ther anermiles."

Proceeding a few yards further into the cave, he turned abruptly to the left, and entered a large circular room. Here the party were greeted with a chorus of howls, yells, and snarlings, which continued until the old man, said:

"Hush! yer 'tarnal critters! Don't yer see I've brought yer some company?"

Immediately the growling ceased, and the old man led the way around the room.

Chained to the walls were four monster bears and an equal number of panthers, and they manifested great pleasure when the old trapper patted them on the head, and called them by their names.

The party were much surprised when the old trapper removed the chain from the neck of the largest grizzly, and said to him—"Now go an' shake paws with ther gentlemen." The bear did as he was ordered, and returned to his master.

"Do you have many visitors?" asked the scout.

"No, yer ther only men these anermiles has seen in sight year," was the reply of the trapper.

"I should think it would take you all of the time to keep these fellows in meat."

"Thar yer mightily mistaken then, for when thar is too many reds about, I send them out ter hunt fur me! Now yer moughtn't like ter b'lieve me, but I kin send any one uv 'em out, an' they'll bring in suthen ter eat quicker nor either uv yer fellers kin."

"Is it possible that they are so well trained as that?" asked the scout.

"I'll show yer," replied the hunter, and he let loose a large panther, and patting him on the head, said:

"Now, Andy Jackson, go an' ketch me a deer, an' be spry about it, too! Yer knows whar ter find 'em, don't yer?"

The animal looked up at the hunter's face, and then actually nodded his head in assent.

"Wull, go on then, an' don't yer stop ter play!"

The panther bounded past the party and disappeared in the end.

"in the world can he get out?" asked Curtiss.
"He can not swing over the chain?"

"I reckon he could ef I'd ever l'arnt him! But yer see there's no occasion—this yer hole goes clean through ther mountain. But I'll show yer thet some other time."

"Hark! What is that?"

"It's Andy Jackson passin' ther guard," replied the trapper.

"Who do you have for a guard?"

"He's er brother uv Andy Jackson, but I calls him Barnum jest 'cause he kin humbug more Injuns than any other feller in ther kentry, 'thout it ar' ther king uv humbugs, old Barnum his self. Tell yer what, stranger, he's ther knowin'est varmint uv 'em all. 'Tain't more'n ten days ago, I war out looking arter things gineraly, when I run inter a nest uv 'bout a dozen Blackfeet. They had er white feller what they war a-goin' ter roast, an' I allowed it didn't look jest right, so I kem back an' got Andy Jackson an Barnum, an' we went fur ter stop ther fun. Wull, they war so 'tarnal busy with ther white man that they didn't see us at all, tell jest as they war goin' ter set fire ter ther brush. Then I shot ther feller what was ther leader, an' you'd jest orter see'd them two boys, Andy an' Barnum, sail in, an' go ter sp'ilin' Injuns! Fact, thar didn't a one uv 'em git away! All ther Injuns in this kentry are scart uv me, an call me a heap big medicine; so they don't very often kem around here—an' thet leaves me all uv ther trappin' ter myself. Kem, let's go back now to ther fire."

"But what will become of Andy Jackson?" asked the scout.

"Oh, he'll kem back purty soon, an' be in his stall when I want him!"

"What will he do with the meat, even supposing that he gets any?"

"He'll dervide with the rest, like a man," replied the trapper.

"I don't believe—"

The speaker was interrupted by the old man, saying:

"Thar he kems, now. Ef yer don't b'lieve it, jest keep watch on him."

The trained panther came bounding in, with the carcass of a deer in his mouth, and thrown across his back.

Kelly noticed that the head was gone, and said:

"Andy stopped by the way to take his own lunch, I see."

"Yer don't see anything uv ther kind! Andy jest chawed ther head off, an' giv it to Barnum, 'cause thet's his favorite piece. 'Sides yer see it saves ther trouble uv runnin' back when he feeds ther rest. Yer needn't laugh, fur as sure as yer live, that ar' Andy Jackson has got more good sense than

half uv ther humans in this territory. Now, ef yer ain't in a hurry, jest watch ther critter."

The panther had laid the deer upon the floor of the cavern, and stood wagging his tail in anticipation, while the old hunter took his knife and proceeded to cut it into so many pieces as there were animals.

"Thar, Andy," he said, "feed ther rest, an' take yer own piece, an' go ter bed."

The party were by this time prepared for 'most any degree of tractability on the part of the animal, yet they could not repress an exclamation of admiration and surprise, when they saw the animal do as he was bid; it was hard for them to imagine how they could be brought so completely under the control of the strange old man.

They recrossed the chasm in the same manner in which they had gone over, and were soon again seated around the fire.

Curtiss and the Indian girl were upon one side, by themselves, completely lost to their surroundings. But, the story of their love-making was so like others of the same kind, that need not repeat it here. Those of my readers who do not "know how it is themselves," have the sympathies of the writer!

CHAPTER X.

A WOMAN ON THE TRAIL.

IN his fight with the Pawnees, Red Pine had lost several warriors, which fact was not at all calculated to produce any good feeling on his part. More than this, he lost what he could not well afford to—his temper.

He fumed and swore around, venting his anger upon whoever happened to get in his way.

He resolved to make one more desperate fight, even if he had to take all the warriors of the Sioux nation to do it. Just then, he felt as if he would like to exterminate the whole Pawnee tribe, and the Blackfeet, too, with the excep-

tion of Snowdrop. Especially would he sweep from the face of the earth the young pale-face who had come between him and his desires.

To this end he dispatched his swiftest runners to the Sioux village with an earnest appeal for help. There is no doubt in the world but that he misrepresented facts to his superiors, but then his conscience was one of those elastic affairs which do not give their possessor much trouble, and he thought that all was fair in war as in love.

Then, too, his sister was gone, and he knew that he would not dare to go back without her. Had he been alone, he would have trumped up some lie, by which he might get clear of all responsibility; but he knew that many of the old warriors who were with him, would not hesitate to put the affair in its true light before the councilors of the nation.

Thus we find him encamped with his followers within a few miles of the scene of his recent defeat, to await the return of his messengers.

And White Wolf felt very much as if he had been doing a large amount of work for a very small remuneration.

He was not angry—oh! no! But, as Jehiel remarked when he saw the Pawnees leaving: "I'll jest bet that critter feels awful demoralized!"

White Wolf knew that somewhere among the hills there was a white man who had been instrumental in rescuing Snowdrop from the hands of the Sioux, and who stood between his wishes and the love of the Blackfoot queen; and he resolved to hunt up that white man, and put him out of the way.

So he returned to the place where he had won so decisive and brilliant a victory over the Sioux, and went into camp.

We left Jehiel mounted and ready for whatever might turn up next, and there he sat, as did the whole band of Blackfeet, until the Pawnees were nearly out of sight.

"We will go to the village of my people," said Gray Eagle; and he turned his horse and started for the north, followed by the Blackfoot warriors.

He had gone a full mile when he spoke to Snowdrop; but receiving no answer, he looked around to see what had be-

come of her. Then he saw her and Jehiel standing where he had left them.

Ordering his band to remain where they were, the old chief galloped back.

"Why does my daughter and the Long Hunter stay here?" he asked.

Snowdrop did not reply, but Jehiel did.

"Waal, old man, we was tryin' to think of suthin' mean enough to call you for deserting a friend in this way."

"What does the Long Hunter mean?" asked the old chief.

"I mean just this, that you're an old liar! You agreed to be a friend to us fellers, if Lew would get your gal away from the Sioux! He did it, he did, and now, dog gone your old pictur', you was goin' off hum without tryin' to find out if he is dead or alive! I told Lew just how it would be, when he said you had sworn to befriend him. I don't think much of such friends as that!"

"White Panther promised to bring the scalp of Red Pine to Gray Eagle, and he has not done it."

"Waal," replied Jehiel, "he hain't had time yet. Jest wait a few days, and you'll see him come walkin' inter your camp a-whistlin' Yankee Doodle, and old Red Pine's head under his arm—see if you don't!"

"Gray Eagle can not wait. The Long Hunter had better find his friend and go home, or my warriors will find them and kill them both!"

"Are you goin' to desert Lew Kelly in this way?" asked the thoroughly angry Yankee.

"Gray Eagle owes the pale-face nothing, for he has not done all he promised."

"I've a good mind to shoot you myself, you 'tarnal old traitor you!" exclaimed Jehiel.

The old chief did not notice him, but turning to Snowdrop he said:

"Come, my daughter."

He turned and started toward his band, but Snowdrop made no effort to follow him.

He came back with an angry frown upon his face. It was the first time Snowdrop had ever refused to obey him.

"Why does my daughter linger?" he asked.

"Snowdrop will not enter her father's lodge until he has found the White Panther! He saved her life, and Snowdrop will not desert him!"

"The Pawnees have gone that way, and they will find him and kill him!" replied the old chief.

"Then Snowdrop will die with him!" exclaimed the maiden.

The old chief loved his daughter as the apple of his eye, and he knew that she would not give up by coaxing—she was too much a chip of the old block for that.

He could take her home by force; but she would certainly run away if he did.

He could confine her so that she could not leave; but she would take her own life.

He knew the scout would not take Snowdrop for his wife—he had heard him say that he had a wife already.

Looking at the case in all its bearings, he resolved to assist his daughter in finding White Panther, and then compel him to marry her, whether or not. So he said:

"Gray Eagle will find the pale-face, and give him to Snowdrop."

Signaling for his band to return, he started for the place where he had last seen Lew Kelly. When within a few miles of the place a scout came running back with the intelligence that the Pawnees were encamped on the old battle-ground.

This intelligence was not at all pleasing to him, for it necessitated the making of his camp on the side of the range where he then was. However, necessity knows no law, and he was obliged to call a halt upon arriving at the foot of the hill.

He did not know that the object of his search was within short rifle-shot of him at that moment.

He had made his camp close by a small stream which ran along the base of the hill. Upon the opposite side of the stream the rocks towered above them a hundred feet or more, forming an insurmountable barrier to further progress in that direction; and with his scouts out, he did not fear surprise.

Lew Kelly was telling Bear-Paw how he came to be in

that section, and also of the treaty of peace he had made with Gray Eagle.

"But," he said, "I don't know whether the old chief will consider himself bound to keep the contract until I bring him the scalp of the Sioux chief, as I promised. I hope he will, for there is plenty of game about here, and every indication of gold. In the hills, where my friend and I made our camp, we found several nuggets of pure gold; and I have no doubt there is plenty of it among these hills, as they are of the same range."

"I've got er gold-mine what'll do yer eyes good ter see," said the old trapper. "Jest wait er minit an' I'll show yer."

He went to the opposite side of the room, and returned, bearing a buck-skin bag, which he opened and poured the contents upon the floor before the scout.

"Thar," he said, "is about fifty pounds of ther durned stuff, enuf ter make yer rich fur life; an' I'll give yer ther hull lot on't, ef ye'll agree ter go hum, an' never say nothin' about thar bein' any here."

The scout was too much surprised to reply.

"What does yer say?" asked the trapper. "Ain't it enuf?"

"Yes, it is enough," replied Kelly; "but, did you find it all among these hills?"

"Sartin. An' I kin show yer more nor ten bushels uv it, layin' around loose!"

"Where?"

"Down in ther kasm—will yer go down an' see it?"

"Not now," replied the scout. "I must find out, first, where my friend is. I blame myself for keeping still so long, and if you will let me out, I will go to the top of the bluff and see if I can discover him."

"Ail right. I'll go with yer," replied Bear-Paw.

Kelly took care to return the gold to the bag, and place it where he could find it again; then he signified his readiness to go.

"I'm goin' out, gal," the old trapper said to the aged negro woman. "Jest keep yer ears open, fur I may be in a hurry when I kem back," and they were ushered into the outer cavern.

A low whinny greeted Kelly.

"Poor old horse!" he said, "you are on short rations just now. I must try and get you something to eat."

"Yes," said Bear-Paw, "we'll cut some grass fur ther critter, an' bring back with us."

Kelly led his horse to the water, and after he had drank, returned him to the cavern and told him to lie down.

The two men were soon upon the level plateau which formed the top of the hill. Once there, they saw a sight which surprised them not a little.

Directly below them was the camp of the Pawnees, while beyond, and not more than five miles away, they could discern another camp, but could not make out who they were.

Kelly easily recognized the Pawnees, for he was well acquainted with them, and knew White Wolf almost as well as he did Jehiel.

"I wonder who those others can be, off yonder," he said.

"I can't tell yer, they's so fur off; but you can bet they ain't no Blackfeet!"

"How do you know?" asked the scout.

"'Cause that 'ar is west, an' ther Blackfoot village ar' off here ter ther north further. Le's go over ter ther other side an' see ef we can diskiver them."

Approaching the other side, they saw immediately below them the camps of Gray Eagle, and Kelly recognized his friend Jehiel, and also Snowdrop.

"What does this all mean, do you suppose?" he asked.

"Can't tell," replied the trapper. "It looks as ef there mought be fun ahead. But come on, le's cut some grass fur ther hoss an' git back. We'll know more about it afore mornin'."

With their knives they cut each a large bundle of grass, and returned to the cavern. The scout threw down his load, but the old trapper said:

"No, not thar. We must take ther animile inside, fur I an goin' ter hev this room full uv Injuns afore long."

"What do you mean?" asked the scout.

"Jest yer wait an' see," was all the reply he could get.

The old trapper was getting terribly excited about some

thing, and it was not until after the huge rock door was between them and the outer cave that he regained his composure.

Kelly found a good place for his horse, and throwing a bundle of grass before him, left him to his own enjoyment. This done, he was about to seat himself beside the fire, when Bear-Paw said to him—"Kem with me," and they proceeded to the chasm, where they swung over.

From a recess in the wall the old man took a bow and arrows and a long rope, and led the way into the room used as the menagerie.

"Now," said he, "jest write er letter ter yer friend, an' I'll let him know whar yer ar'"—and while the scout was writing a few words to satisfy his friend of his safety, the old trapper went about among his animals, talking to them, and petting them in his usual manner.

When the letter was completed, he told Kelly to follow him, and then led the way to the rear entrance of the cave.

He soon arrived near the opening, where he halted and said:

"Don't let Barnum humbug yer, fur he kin scratch like ther Old Boy, ef he's a mind ter. Yer see, he's crosser nor ther rest, an' ain't in ther habit uv lettin' folks go by him. But ef yer keep close ter me, I reckon ye'll be all right."

Proceeding a few feet further, they came to an abrupt turn in the passage, and a low growl warned them that they were near the guard. The old trapper held his torch before him and went ahead.

"Shut up, Barnum! What ar' yer so sassy about? I'll give yer a lickin'," he said, "ef yer don't quit yer foolishness."

And he stood and talked to the animal until Kelly had passed beyond his reach.

About fifty feet further on, they came to the end of the cave, and the daylight streaming in from above showed Kelly the outlet of this singular cavern. With the exception of the chasm, it was a complete tunnel through the mountain.

The old trapper brought a ladder of poles, which he placed

against the side of the opening, and told the scout to go up and see what he could discover.

An exclamation of surprise escaped the lips of Kelly, as he beheld, not more than four rods away, the camp of the Blackfeet.

Jehiel was just leading his horse to the creek to give him water, when the scout told the old man to come up where he was.

In a moment Bear-Paw was by his side, and hastily fitting an arrow to the bow-string, he sent it within an inch of Jehiel's foot, where it stuck in the sand.

Jehiel sprung back as though bitten by a snake, and looked up to see who had discharged it; but could discover no sign of any living being in the huge boulders opposite. Then he pulled the arrow from the ground, and returned to the camp.

"Come here, little gal," he said to Snowdrop; "I want to tell you suthin."

The Indian girl came out, and Jehiel showed her the arrow, and after explaining how it came in his possession, added:

"I guessed you might know more about it than me. What does it mean? Kin you tell, from the looks of the stick, what tribe made it?"

The girl took the arrow and examined both the steel head and the spiral coil of feathers upon the tip.

"Snowdrop does not know. She will ask her father; perhaps he can tell—but what is that tied around it?"

Then Jehiel observed, what had before escaped his notice, that a piece of paper was wrapped about the arrow-stem, and he carefully removed it.

"Jewhillakens!" was his exclamation, as he recognized the handwriting.

He read it over to himself, while Snowdrop stood waiting for an explanation.

Jehiel looked up with a puzzled expression—he did not know whether it would be safe for him to tell her or not. He more than half-doubted the sincerity of the Blackfoot chief—at the same time, he had resolved to shoot him, should he find that Gray Eagle had deceived them.

And, he argued, what need he care for Snowdrop? She still insisted that she would be no man's wife if she could not be the wife of White Panther.

Jehiel knew that there was no earthly hope for her in that direction, and he rather congratulated himself on the fact that he was not the only one who would be disappointed.

"Waal, Snowdrop," he said, "this here letter is from Lew Kelly, the feller what you call White Panther—"

"Where is he? What does he say?" eagerly demanded the Indian girl.

"He's all right," replied Jehiel, "and I'll read you what he says," and the scout read:

"FRIEND JEHIEL: I am safe and sound, and with good friends. Tell Gray Eagle that the Pawnees are encamped on the other side of the hill. If he wants to fight them, let him find the pass to the top of the hill, where he can pick them off at his leisure. There is another camp a few miles further west, but I can not tell who they are. As soon as it is dark, do you ride around the hill until you strike the creek. Get into it, and walk *up* until you come to the falls, where you will find me. We must leave here as soon as possible; there is danger ahead.

Yours, LEW."

As he concluded reading, the face of the Indian girl grew bright, and she said:

"I am so glad! I shall see the White Panther once more.

"Yaas, I s'pose so," said Jehiel. "But you'll please to observe that he didn't ask you to come along."

"No matter, I shall go!" was the positive reply.

"Waal, jest as you like; but if you want the old man to know any thing about this gittin' on top of the hill, you'd better tel. him—I won't! The infarnal old traitor! I wouldn't keer a durn if the Pawnees should lick him like blazes!"

Snowdrop went and told her father what the scout had written, and he immediately sent several warriors to look for the pass.

The top of the hill was inaccessible except at one point, and a dozen well-armed men could have guarded the plateau against all the Indians in the territory.

The shades of night were just falling around the Indian camp, when, without a word as to their intentions, Jehiel and Snowdrop started south, along the base of the hill, in search of the creek which was to lead them to the hiding-place of the brave scout.

CHAPTER XI.

CROW EAT CROW.

UPON returning to the menagerie room the old trapper still retained the rope, of which he had as yet made no use. Seeing that the scout noticed it, he said:

"Yes, I didn't know but yer mought want ter draw yer friend up ter ther openin' uv ther cave, but yer seemed ter hev some other plans uv yer own; so now mebbey we'd better improve the time ter go down inter ther kasm."

"I should like to visit it before I leave," replied Kelly. "I am afraid we shall never have another chance."

"What makes yer talk that a-way?" asked Bear-Paw.

"I don't know, indeed, but somehow I feel as if there was going to be some fighting around here, before this time to-morrow; and I have a kind of foreordination that you and I will be mixed up in it."

"An' so hev I," replied the old trapper. "An' more nor that, I've er big notion that I'll git killed, and yer won't! But it's time enuf to think on that bime-by. Only ef I should happen ter go under, an' yer don't, I want ye ter promise me yer will take the nigger gal with yer, an' take good care uv her es long she lives. She's ther only friend I hev on airth, an' I'll leave enuf fur ter pervide fur her es long es she lives. What do yer say?"

"That I will accept the trust, and guard her life as I would my own!" replied the scout.

"I knew yer would, and now let's go down."

He fastened one end of the rope round a projecting rock, and let the other fall into the darkness below.

"Does that rope reach to the bottom of the chasm?" asked Kelly.

"No," replied the old trapper, "not more nor half-way. But I've got er pair uv stairs thar what goes ter ther bottom. I'll go first, with the light, then yer kin foller. Yer see ther rope is knotted, so that yer won't hev much trouble in hangin' on—an' boy, jest stick some torch-wood in yer belt, fur it's crful dark down thar."

The old trapper descended the rope with an agility surprising in one so old, and gave the signal for the scout to follow.

He soon found himself standing upon a ledge of rock, about six feet square, from which he could see steps leading down into the darkness below, evidently cut in the soft limestone rock.

To the scout there seemed no end to the steps, but he soon found himself walking along upon the level ground.

"Light er couple uv torches," said Bear-Paw, "an' I'll show yer more gold nor yer ever dreamed on."

The scout did so, and the old man's promise was fulfilled.

Some great convulsion of nature had rent in twain the mountain of rock, revealing on all sides countless seams—and they were filled with gold. What he had supposed to be pebbles under his feet, proved on inspection, to be nuggets of pure gold.

He thought not of the treasures by which he was surrounded, but of the Great Architect who had planned it all; and reverently he bowed his head, as if in the immediate presence of the Divine Master.

He was utterly overwhelmed by the magnificent grandeur of his surroundings, and could easily have dreamed himself in fairy-land. Perhaps, when he had gone the way of all the living, strangers would come here and the world would be electrified by the intelligence of the marvelous discoveries they would make.

He had pledged his word that he would not tell any one of the existence of gold in that locality, and yet—poor human nature craved more.

The old trapper stood and watched him, as in mute adoration he contemplated the scene, until finally he said:

"Ef yer wants er mule-load instead uv er back-load, jest help yerself! Ef I peg out in ther scrimmage what ar' sure to come to-morrer, then I won't hold yer to yer promise—yer kin take all yer want, an' tell who yer please."

"I hope you may live many years, and enjoy the wealth that is yours!" replied the scout. "May I ask why you remain here in solitude? It is not natural for men to live alone, and I do not believe you are *obliged* to hide from your fellow-man."

"Sometime," said the old man, "I will tell you my history. Then you will not wonder that I choose to live alone!" Then fearing that the scout had detected the difference in his speech, into which he had momentarily been betrayed, he changed to his customary vernacular.

"Now that yer know ther way, yer kin come down an' help yerself any time. An' now less git back, ur ther rest uv ther folks 'll be wonderin' whar we ar'."

In a short time they presented themselves before the fire; but it is doubtful if Curtiss or the Indian girl had missed them at all.

They were seated where the scout had left them, and seemed no nearer the end of their story than when they first began.

That old, old story, forever new!

When will men cease to tell it? and when will women weary of listening?

At first the scout was inclined to think that Curtiss was trifling with the girl's affections; but he became satisfied that the young man was "really and truly" in love.

Thus far they had given the lie to the remark of Shakespeare (or some other man) that "the course of true love never runs smooth."

The colored *gal* sat before the fire, smoking her pipe, and utterly oblivious to all earthly matters, croning the air to some old hymn she had learned—where?

She was never more surprised in her life than when the old trapper gave ner a slap upon the back, and said:

"Kem, gal, it's time ter go ter bed. This yer young

feller Les got all he kin do ter court one gal, an' he's properly thinkin' that yer room is better nor yer company, eh? An' jest make a good bed fur ther leetle gal while yer about it."

The old woman did as she was bid, and soon all hands had sought their respective couches.

But did any of them sleep? Doubtful!

As the firelight flickered about, making strange and grotesque figures upon the wall, all were awake, and trying, amid the dim shadows, to solve the problem of life—to work out the destiny in store for them.

It is needless to say that in the doctrine of manifest destiny they were firm believers; and, as they have all night before them, we will leave them for awhile, and record the events transpiring in another quarter.

The runners who had been sent out by Red Pine were particularly fortunate in meeting several large parties of Sioux, who, in view of the reported fun and plunder ahead, hastened to join the chief.

So we find him all ready for marching, on the evening of the same day that Gray Eagle and his band were about changing their quarters to the top of the hill, within the dark recesses of which our friends lay castle-building.

As the darkness began to envelop the earth, Red Pine, at the head of his warriors, cautiously approached the camp of the Pawnees.

He was aware of their being there, and congratulated himself that now he would have a glorious revenge.

But White Wolf was watchful, and his warriors were in readiness to meet the Sioux as soon as they came in sight.

He did not know that any new accessions had been made to the Sioux forces, and did not doubt that he could whip them as easily as he had done once before.

But the Sioux made the attack soon after midnight, and the fortunes of war were decided in their favor. The Pawnees were completely routed.

Daylight revealed to the Blackfeet upon the hill the singular fact that the Pawnees were changed to Sioux.

The only avenue was well guarded, and Gray Eagle did

not fear a surprise. His only anxiety now, was for his daughter.

He had formed his camp very nearly in the center of the plateau, which covered an area of perhaps forty acres, so that discovery from below was an impossibility, as long as they kept away from the edge.

But in this case their curiosity obtained the mastery over their prudence, and an incautious exposure of one's body convinced them that the Sioux were on the alert.

Before long the hill was surrounded by Indians, eager to find the pass to the top, which they had not much trouble in doing, as they had only to follow the trail left by the Blackfeet.

An attempt to go up was met by the most disastrous result, the whole file of Sioux warriors being swept from the path at the first blow. They withdrew to the foot of the hill near the pass, and resolved to wait.

If the thing could be accomplished in no other way, Red Pine had resolved to starve them out.

Gray Eagle had been improvident in not laying in a supply of provisions before going up, and he saw his mistake when it was too late.

About noon a loud shout was heard, and Gray Eagle, looking from the top of the hill, saw a great commotion in the Sioux camp.

The cause was soon apparent. They had taken a prisoner.

And Gray Eagle did not need a spy-glass to show him that the prisoner was his daughter.

Red Pine did not care, now, for the lives that had been lost. He forgot for the moment his habitual stoicism, and danced for joy.

"Waugh! the Blackfoot squaw has bad luck!" he said. "The warriors of Red Pine have killed the Pawnees, and there is now no help for her. The Queen of the Blackfeet shall yet sit in the lodge of a Sioux chief."

"Never!" exclaimed Snowdrop. "My people are near, and they will sweep the Sioux from the earth."

"Let the Blackfoot maiden look up, and she will see that her father and his warriors are prisoners. There is but one

path up there, and Red Pine will stay here until the last of the Blackfeet are starved to death, if Snowdrop does not consent to be his squaw!"

Tradition had handed down to her the legend of the last of the Illinii—she knew how the remnant of a once powerful tribe had sought a refuge from their relentless foes, in just such a place as this. She knew that when the enemy had at last gained the top of the rock, they found only the dead bodies of that ill-fated band.

Was it possible that the tragic scene was to be re-enacted here, and this hill become another *Starved Rock*?

She knew the fallacy of trying to oppose Red Pine in his ambition, so, like a sensible girl, she closed her mouth and walked away to the lodge assigned her.

Red Pine was not without his misgivings. He knew that as long as he pleased, he could keep the Blackfeet from coming down the pass. He knew, also, that they could make smoke-signals, which would call down upon him more Blackfoot warriors than he could successfully cope with; and though he had secured the principal prize, he dared not go back without his sister.

He was satisfied that she was somewhere among the hills with his late prisoner, Curtiss, and he resolved to find her at all hazards.

The Blackfeet had withdrawn from the edge of the bluff, and an ominous silence reigned around. Subtle influences were working upon the brain of the Sioux chief, and he wished himself out of the scrape.

How came the Blackfoot queen in his power?

Jehiel and Snowdrop, when they left the camp of her father to go in search of the scout, soon came to a stream, up which they turned their horses' heads, and silently traveled on. After an hour's hard toil Jehiel came to where the stream issued from a narrow cleft in the rock, and he was disappointed.

"There hain't any falls here!" he exclaimed. "I wonder why in thunder Lew didn't say where the creek was, and not let a feller lose time in tumblin' over these rocks—to say nothin' of tearin' his clothes?"

They returned to the place where they had entered the stream and again started on. Before long they found another, which Jehiel was sure was the right one, but his search for the falls had ended in precisely the same manner as his first attempt.

And so they kept it up until long after midnight, when they tied their horses and lay down to sleep.

They did not awake until after daylight, but as there was no breakfast to cook, they had not long to wait, and again started on.

Up at least half a dozen streams they went, only to meet with disappointment.

The forenoon was well-nigh spent, when they returned to the place of their last entrance, and again started around the hill.

Presently they came to a stream which was formed of two smaller ones; one upon each side of a spur in the hill.

"Now, Snowdrop," said Jehiel, "you go up one, and I will the other. We'll save time in that way, and if I find the falls I will fire my rifle—then you can come to me. If you find them first then you can fire yours. And if we don't neither one of us find it, then we'll meet ag'in here."

Snowdrop still carried her father's rifle, and she consented to the hunter's plan, and at once began the ascent of the stream.

Jehiel had been fortunate enough to find the falls, and was about to discharge his rifle, when he heard the voice of the scout:

"Don't do that, Jehiel! Get in here as soon as you can."

"But, Lew, I told the little gal I'd shoot my gun off if I found you first."

"Oh, fudge! What did she come along for?" ejaculated the scout.

"You'll find out when she sees you," replied Jehiel.

While they were yet conversing they heard the report of a gun, which Jehiel recognized as that of his companion.

"What in thunder does that mean?" he asked.

Just at that moment there came a loud whoop from the same direction.

"It means that she has been taken prisoner by the Pawnees," said the scout.

"Waal, I'm goin' to find out for sure," returned the Yankee. "Come with me, Lew."

The two men proceeded down the stream until they came within sight of the place where Jehiel had parted with the Indian girl. Kelly caught him by the arm and drew him back behind a projecting rock, at the same time whispering:

"See—there goes a lot of them, and they have taken Snowdrop prisoner. They are not Pawnees, either, but Sioux! I wonder what it all means?"

Then he thought of a plan by which he hoped to entrap them, and rescue the Indian girl.

"Is your gun loaded, Jehiel?" he asked.

"Sartin! Do you think I'm a fool?" replied Jehiel.

"Then let us have a shot at them."

Together they raised their guns and fired, and two Indians dropped dead in their tracks.

The rest, looking up the stream, saw the two white men, and a dozen of them sprung in pursuit.

"Now run for the falls," said Kelly, and he led the way.

They arrived at the opening several rods ahead of the Sioux.

"Here," said the scout; "you stay here, and shoot every one that makes his appearance. I will take care of your horse."

He led the horse to the door leading to the middle room, and giving the signal, was admitted without delay.

Passing in, he tied the horse near his own, and shouted:

"Come, Curtiss, Bear-Paw, get your guns and come out; there is some fun for you!"

The two men sprung up and followed him, and were soon beside Jehiel, waiting for the Sioux to make their appearance.

They soon heard them, moving cautiously up the creek until they arrived opposite the opening, and there they stood gazing at the falls.

They had not yet discovered the entrance to the cave, and were doubtless wondering where the white men could have disappeared so suddenly.

"Fire!" cried Bear-Paw, and four of the Indians found a resting-place beneath the waters of the stream.

The rest turned to run, but the party of whites sprung behind them, and before they could reach a protecting shelter of rock, four more were sent to their final account.

The scout and Jehiel started in pursuit of the remaining Sioux, but the old trapper called them back.

"Jest let 'em go, boys. Ef they don't bring back er pack uv ther varmint, then yer may say Old Bear-Paw's er liar. Then, yer see, we kin captur' a good haul uv 'em."

When they were once more within the cave the old man asked Kelly who the new-comer was.

"He is my pardner—the fellow I was telling you about the other day."

"He's er Yank, ain't he?"

"Yes," replied Kelly, "but he is all right—I will vouch for him."

"Wull, kem inter ther other room. Ther old gal must hev dinner ready by this time, I reckon, an' we'll want er full stomach fur our arternoon's work."

Their dinner consisted of a huge venison roast, strong coffee, and wild honey; and though not an elaborate bill of fare, it was one to which every one of the party could do full justice.

After dinner the old trapper called Kelly to one side, and said:

"Thar's somebody a-top uv this yer hill, an' I'm er goin' ter find out who it ar'. Wull yer go erlong?"

"Certainly," replied the scout.

Jehiel wanted to accompany them, but when the scout told him there was danger of soiling his clothes, he laughed and said he "b'lieved he'd stay there and have a nap."

CHAPTER XII.

COURTSHIP UNDER DIFFICULTIES.

THE old trapper and Kelly made their way quietly to the top of the hill through the canyon before mentioned, and were immediately discovered by the Blackfeet, who rushed for their arms and were about to fire upon the two white men, when Gray Eagle interposed his authority, he having recognized the scout.

The two white men walked into the Blackfoot camp and seating themselves beside the fire, entered into conversation with the chief.

"Red Pine, the Sioux, has taken the daughter of Gray Eagle once more," he said. "Can White Panther tell who is to rescue her?"

"It is as much your business as anybody's, I should say," replied the scout, who had heard what Gray Eagle had said about him to Jehiel and Snowdrop.

"Does White Panther remember his promise?"

"Yes. But it seems that the chief of the Blackfeet has forgotten his," replied the scout.

"No. Gray Eagle never forgets! When the White Panther does *all* he promised, then the pale-faces can come and go when they please, among the Black Hills."

The scout felt the spirit of perverseness rising within him.

"I don't know as I care very much about it any more," he replied. "It is all the same to me if Red Pine keeps the Blackfoot queen, and starves her father to death—as it seems he can if he wants to. Jehiel told me *all* about it, chief; how you was going off home without making an effort to find me, after I had risked my life half a dozen times for you and your daughter!"

"Snowdrop loves the White Panther," suggested Gray Eagle.

"I don't care if she does; I don't love her, and I have told her so; and if she had not made a fool of herself by

running after me, she would not now be in the hands of the Sioux. But no matter about that—you don't love me, if she does; and I am half a mind to let the Sioux starve you out."

"That will never be!" replied the chief. "Gray Eagle has made the smoke signals which will bring every warrior in the Blackfoot village to fight the Sioux. Then Gray Eagle can go down and fight them, too, and when he has killed them all, he will take White Panther prisoner, and *make* him marry Snowdrop!"

"You must be an old fool!" retorted the scout. "But then, I won't quarrel with you. When you get ready to take me prisoner, please let me know, and perhaps I can help you—and, chief, if it should accidentally happen that you get taken yourself, let me know that, too; and if I don't help you, it will be because I don't want to!"

The scout and his companion were turning to leave, when Gray Eagle asked:

"What is to hinder Gray Eagle from going down where his pale-face brothers go?"

"Perhaps nothing—perhaps much!" replied the scout. "In the first place, there is some one down there who will shoot the first Indian he sees, whether Blackfoot or Sioux! That is reason enough, and if it was not, there is a better one—I don't want you to go down there!"

The old chief could not avoid showing surprise at the bold, and even threatening language of the scout, and he concluded to adopt a different course.

"Would White Panther see the father of Snowdrop, who sees the pale-face, die here? Gray Eagle has nothing to eat."

"There is no one to blame but yourself," replied the scout. "You should have brought up provisions enough to last you. Are you very hungry?"

"Yes," replied Gray Eagle.

"Then why don't you go down and fight the Sioux? They have plenty to eat, and the plains are covered with buffalo."

"The Sioux can not come up, neither can the warriors of Gray Eagle go down!"

"Then why don't you stand up here and pick them off, one at a time? If you could manage to shoot Red Pine, the rest would leave—then you could go down and have things all your own way!"

The remarks of the scout were very tantalizing, and the old chief nearly choked himself trying to smother his anger.

"Come, Bear-Paw," said the scout, "let's go to the edge of the bluff and see what the Sioux are up to. You come too, chief."

The three cautiously approached the edge of the cliff and looked down upon the Sioux camp.

Every thing was quiet there—the warriors were lying around on the grass—smoking, sleeping or gambling, as they pleased.

Snowdrop was sitting at the door of a rudely-constructed teepee, her head bowed in meditation; while twenty yards away stood the Sioux chief, engaged in a like manner. None of them had yet observed the three figures above them.

"Gray Eagle, have you a bow and arrows?" asked the scout.

"Yes," replied the chief.

"Get it, then, and send an arrow down to Snowdrop. I want her to look up here."

The chief did so, and a glad smile filled the Indian girl's face when she saw the scout with her father.

Now that she knew he was safe, she trusted with all her loving woman's heart that he would rescue her from her captors.

Just then two Indians, who had been amusing themselves with a pack of greasy cards, looked up and saw them, and with a loud yell they sprung for their guns.

"Le's salt them fellers," said the old trapper, now speaking for the first time since he left the cave.

The two white men discharged their rifles.

Immediately all was commotion in the Sioux camp. A hundred armed men sprung to their feet, but there were none of the enemy in sight; and the howlings over the bodies of their slain warriors were both long and loud.

The scout and Bear-Paw then returned to the cave, and seated themselves beside the fire, and for a few minutes had all they could do to answer Jehiel's questions.

"If the Blackfoot chief had any spunk at all, he could easily drive the Sioux away," said Kelly; "but it seems as if he was completely discouraged. I'll just bet, if it was me, I would make a big hole in their ranks before dark!"

"Oh, Lew!" exclaimed Jehiel, as a new idea struck him, "let's me and you go up and take the contrack of lickin' the Sioux! Mebbe we could make some kind of a swap with old Gray Eagle, and get a load of beaver-skins to carry home with us. What do you say?"

"I say that we can have a load of something better to carry, without running any risk."

"I don't know of any thing any better," said Jehiel. "Beaver and mink fetch a good price, now-a-days, and we kin make our 'tarnal fortunes—pervidin', of course, we kin git the contrack. But then, mebbe, arter we'd licked the Sioux, old Gray Eagle wouldn't pay us for it—he's an o'nery old thief. What do you suppose is the reason, Lew, that Snowdrop don't fall in love with me? Ain't I good-lookin' enough? Can't I shoot as good as the best of them—and hain't I done enough for her, I'd like to know?"

"I'm sure I cau not tell, Jehiel. Have you said any thing to her about it?"

"Yaas, and she give me the mitten quicker 'n spat!" said Jehiel.

"Well, don't get discouraged—perhaps she will come around all right yet. Now, Jehiel, supposing you were rich enough to go back to Vermont and buy out the richest man in your county, would you want to marry an Indian girl?"

"In course I would! Darn it all, Lew, I love the gal, and I don't care whether she is white or black, red or yellow! 'Sides, there hain't no chance to speculate out here. And I don't never expect to get rich here."

"Sit still a minute, and I will convince you to the contrary," said Kelly, and he produced the bag of gold which the old trapper had given him, and poured the contents out before the astonished Jehiel.

"Thunder, Lew! Where did you get all this? Is there

any more where this come from? Du tell me if it's all your'n?"

"One question at a time, Jehiel—they will last the longer. In the first place, this bag of gold was a present to me from our friend Bear-Paw; and I assure you there is plenty more where this came from—and this is all mine. Under certain circumstances I shall be at liberty to show you where it came from, and to furnish you enough to make you richer than the wealthiest man in the State of Vermont! But, if those circumstances never transpire, then I will divide this with you."

The scout would have revealed the secret of the chasm, but he did not feel at liberty to do so, as the old trapper had trusted to his honor. He turned to Bear-Paw, and said:

"Will you show Jehiel your menagerie?"

"Sartin, ef he wants ter see 'em," replied the old man, leading the way to the chasm.

Jehiel had not the slightest intimation of what was before him, and his astonishment was unbounded when they arrived at the chasm.

"Jewhillakens!" he exclaimed. "S'pose a feller should walk off here sometime, would he ever touch bottom?"

He received no reply, for had there been any, he was too much surprised just then to have heard it. He saw the old trapper swing off on the end of the rope, and heard him when he stopped upon the opposite side, and waved his torch as a signal for the scout to catch the rope.

"Now," said Kelly, "you go over."

Jehiel showed signs of cowardice.

"How fur is it over there?" he asked.

"About sixty feet," was the reply.

"But durn it, Lew, I might fall and break my tarnal neck."

"Oh! there is no danger of that—all you have to do is to hang on to the rope; and you see there is a big knot in the end, so that your hands won't slip."

"But what's the use in goin' over there? Hain't there plenty of room here?"

"Yes, I suppose so; but I want to show you something on the other side," replied the scout.

"Wal, I hain't afraid, in course, but if it hain't necessary I won't go!"

"It is necessary!" answered the scout.

"Wal, if I must, I must; but the Lord knows I don't want to! And Lew, if I fall and kill myself, I shall always blame you."

"All right! I'll take the blame—you hang on to the rope."

Jehiel let his weight bear on the rope, shut his eyes, and raising his feet from the floor, soon felt himself swinging through space at a rate that made him hold his breath, and tighten his grip upon the rope. He would have retained his hold and swung back again, had not the old trapper seized him by the arm and stopped him.

They were soon joined by the scout, and proceeded at once to the menagerie.

Here the old trapper stuck his torch in the ground, and spoke with a voice trembling with emotion:

"Here's my pets—jest ther best lot uv b'ars an' painters I ever see'd—an' I've got ter leave 'em! I didn't think uv that when I got 'em here, sech little fellers; but now I feel that I'm er goin ter die, an' thar won't be nobody ter take care uv 'em, an' love 'em as I do!"

Seeing his evident distress, Kelly said:

"If there was any way to get them away from here, and to the settlements, I would agree to take care of them for you. But don't give way to such feelings, Bear-Paw—you may live many years yet to enjoy the companionship of your pets."

The old man bowed his head and remained silent. After a time he asked:

"Do you care any thing about ther daughter uv ther Black foot chief?"

"No, I do not," replied Kelly. "And yet I would rather see her in other hands. If I could only rescue her, and get the Sioux chief's scalp, I should be happy! Then Gray Eagle could have no excuse for not keeping his promise to me."

"Then I'll help yer; an' I reckon we kin do it ef anybody kin!" said the old man.

"I don't think of any way that we can do it, though."

"Kin yer talk the Blackfoot language?"

"Yes," replied the scout.

"Then let's go ter ther openin' whar we war ther other day, an' mebbby yer kin git er chance ter say suthin ter her."

They proceeded to the opening, before described, passing the guard, Barnum, after considerable trouble; for the animal was unusually cross that day, having been some time without food.

Here the scout mounted the ladder, and was soon peering through a fissure at the Sioux camp. Two hours before, he had been upon the hill nearly a hundred feet above his present position.

Again fortune favored him, for he saw the Indian girl approaching the stream close by where he stood.

The scout waited until she had reached the water's edge, when he gave a low whistle.

She looked up, and he spoke to her, making use of the Blackfoot dialect, which, for the convenience of the reader we will interpret.

"Snowdrop," said the scout, "when it is dark, come to the place where you are now, and I will take you away. Bring the Sioux chief with you, that I may take him a prisoner."

"Is it White Panther who speaks?" asked the girl.

"Yes."

"Snowdrop will come."

The conversation had not been heard by the Sioux, and Snowdrop returned to her teepee, while Kelly descended the ladder and stood beside his friends. The three then returned to the main room to await the coming of night.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE MENAGERIE TO THE RESCUE.

ABOUT the time that Snowdrop returned to her teepee, a scout came running into the Sioux camp with the intelligence that a large herd of buffalo were in sight, a few miles to the east; and within five minutes two-thirds of the Sioux, including the chief, Red Pine, had gone in pursuit of them.

Those within the cave knew nothing of this movement, while the Blackfeet at the top, though aware of it, were afraid to make an attack.

Had they been allowed to make use of the pass through which Kelly and the trapper went up and down, every one of them could have left the hill and given battle to the few Sioux who were left to guard the pass and the camp.

Two days without food had not produced a very enviable state of feeling among the Blackfoot braves. Treason was rife among them. Mutterings of discontent arose on every hand, and those who all their lives had been accustomed to render the strictest obedience, now felt the spirit of rebellion.

The young chief, who had led the party from their village, was loud in his denunciations of the policy adopted by the old chief. He used every argument in his power to prove that the old man was in his dotage, and unfit to be intrusted with the government of the nation.

It is quite probable that had he put the question to an actual vote, at that time, the "house" would have been divided in his favor; and it is equally probable that had Gray Eagle known what was "in the wind," the young chief's head would have had something in it besides brains.

But Red Pine was not the first man who has stood aghast at that big little word, *If*.

The old trapper, after consulting with the scout, concluded that it would be best not to say anything to the rest of the party respecting their plans. So that when the shadows of twilight were beginning to close around the Black Hills, the two silently withdrew and crossed the chasm to the rear opening.

The hunting party of the Sioux had not yet returned, and Snowdrop would not come until she could bring the Sioux chief with her.

The scout was not long in determining the cause of her delay, when he saw the hunting party coming across the plain.

He explained the situation of affairs to Bear-Paw.

"But," he said, "the girl will surely come, and she will bring the chief with her. Now, if you have another rope, I can make a lasso, and when she brings him near the rock I will throw it over his head; and we can draw him up without killing him. We can draw the girl up in the same way."

"I've got er rope, an' we'll jest do it as yer hev' planned," replied the old man.

He then led his pet, Barnum, into the menagerie, where he secured him among the rest.

"Thar," he said, "you're all on yer crosser nor ther dickens, an' thet's all right! I'll hev' some work fur yer purty soon, an' I'll pay yer in raw Injuns. Jest keep quiet now till I kem fur yer—then yer may howl, an' snarl, an' fight, an' kill jest all yer a mind ter!"

Then he secured more ropes and took them to the edge of the chasm, where he deposited them upon the floor. Evidently he was looking ahead. Selecting a long, small one he returned to the scout.

Kelly soon had the running noose made in the lasso, and stood awaiting the appearance of Snowdrop and the Sioux chief. Presently he heard the voice of the Indian girl, saying:

"Let the great chief of the Sioux go with Snowdrop to the other side of the stream, where she can talk to him without

his warriors hearing. Showdrop has words that the chief alone must hear."

Red Pine was flattered and readily consented to the arrangement. He hoped that the Blackfoot maiden had changed her mind, and was about to comply with his wishes.

When they were standing upon the opposite side the girl said:

"Snowdrop can not see her people starve to death! Will not the great chief of the Sioux let them come down?"

If the Blackfoot Queen will go with Red Pine, and be his squaw, then her father and his people may come down. Red Pine will divide his meat with them, and the two tribes shall be at peace forever!"

"Snowdrop will go with the chief of the Sioux, and will be his wife—if there is no other way to save her father's life."

"There is no other way! The Blackfoot Queen has made Red Pine happy! He will now take his warriors away from the pass, and Gray Eagle may come down."

Snowdrop did not know what to say. She was not quite sure that the scout was there, or feared that he had been there and left again because she was too late.

She did not see the tall form of the scout rise from the rock, not a dozen feet above where she stood; she did not see the coil of rope shoot out and descend square over the head of the chief.

But she did see the noose slip down over his arms and tighten.

She saw him raised from the ground, and hang suspended in mid-air. She saw another rope lowered to her, and heard the scout say:

"Hang on to that, Snowdrop, and I will pull you up!"

She seized the rope and was soon beside the scout. She flung her arms around his neck, and was about to thank him, when the old trapper interrupted:

"No time fur foolin' now! Take her, Kelly, an' cross ther kasm with her, an' hurry back ter me!"

The scout did as requested, and came back to the opening.

The body of the Sioux chief still swung in the air, and he

was exercising his lungs by calling upon his warriors for help. When the trapper saw that the whole Sioux camp was astir, he said, "Now less snake him in!"

The scout seized the rope with him, and in an incredibly short space of time the Sioux chief was within the cave. Dragging him to the edge of the chasm, the old trapper tied his hands behind him and bound his feet together.

"Here, Kelly," he said, "now yer strap him onter my back, an' I'll take him over thar. Yer kin stay here ef yer wants ter see some fun arterwards!"

The Sioux chief was tied to the back of the old trapper, who swung off, and landing in safety upon the other side, called Jehiel to come and take him off.

This done, the old trapper returned to the scout. "Now then, fur ther end," he said.

By this time the Sioux were pouring into the cave.

"Quick!" exclaimed the old man. "Git inter ther menagery!"

He began at once releasing the hungry animals, and then Kelly understood the horrid doom to which Bear-Paw was about to consign the Sioux.

"Here, Barnum, yer kin go first! Fight, scratch, bite, any way ter kill; only kill all yer kin! An' here, yer, Andy Jackson, pile out thar an' help yer brother!"

The other animals were let loose, and with fearful screams they sprung for the opening, closely followed by the scout and Bear-Paw.

The work of carnage was soon ended in the cave, but the infuriated animals did not pause here.

Down they dashed upon the horror-stricken Sioux, who mingled their yells of despair with the fearful screams of the panthers, and the roar of the grizzlies.

Those of the Sioux who were not disabled mounted their horses and sped away over the plain, to carry the tale of their fearful, inglorious defeat to the Sioux village.

The animals did not pursue them very far, but fell to eating the huge hams of buffalo, which the Sioux had brought in for an altogether different purpose. They were soon gorged to their fullest extent, and of their own accord returned to the room in the cave which they had so long occupied.

"I'm er goin' down ter see what ther critters hev left," said Bear-Paw. "I won't be gone but er minit."

He was about to descend, when a wounded Sioux at the bottom of the rock raised his gun, and sent the contents into the body of the old trapper.

At that distance it could but prove fatal. It was the last spasmodic effort of the Sioux, and his life went out with it.

The old trapper fell back into the arms of the scout, who bore him to the inner room, and laid him upon a pile of furs beside the fire.

Through all the exertions of the scout to restore life, the old man lay senseless.

For nearly an hour he remained in this state, while his friends looked on in mute sympathy.

When his consciousness returned, he recognized the scout, and said :

"Kelly, yesterday I told you I would sometime relate the story of my life, and I will do it now, if God spares my life long enough. I have felt a strange presentiment of evil for several days, and now I know that I have but a few hours to live, and I will be as brief as possible.

"I told you to call me Bear-Paw—my true name is Galaudet. I was born in Scotland, and my father emigrated to this country when I was ten years of age. I say emigrated, but he did not. He started, but the vessel never reached America.

"When nearly in the middle of the Atlantic, the vessel was wrecked in a storm, and all but four perished. My parents found a grave in the ocean, while through an inscrutable dispensation of Divine Providence, I was saved. Three days after the storm, we were picked up by a vessel bound for New Orleans, where we arrived in due season.

"When the story of our misfortunes became known, I was offered a home with a wealthy gentleman of that city, and was by him educated, and started in business. When I was twenty-one my kind guardian died, leaving no family but one lovely daughter.

"She became my wife, and for five years longer we lived happily together.

"At that time I engaged in a speculation which proved disastrous, and I awoke one morning to find the bulk of my fortune swept away. I resolved to go to California, and to that end set out with a party of emigrants, taking with me my wife and the little golden-haired daughter who had been born during the first year of our married life, and also this colored woman, whom you see here.

"Near the western borders of Texas, the train was attacked by Apaches, and I saw my wife struck down before me, and my little one carried off. With no friend left but old Chloe, and no property but my rifle, I was tempted to take my own life, but better counsel prevailed.

"There is no need to tell you of the many years since then—how, after long wanderings, I found myself among these hills, and while trapping, discovered the entrance to this cave. Here Chloe and I have lived these many weary, weary years. The animals you have seen were taken when young, and have lost all their desire to leave here.

"It pains me more than you can well imagine to leave them, for they have been a comfort, even to my broken heart. I would rather kill them myself than to know that they would ever suffer ill-treatment at the hands of another.

"It was a singular fancy of mine to print upon the left arm of my daughter, just above the elbow, a square and compass, in India ink. But I have long since given up all hope of ever meeting her on earth. When I first saw the Sioux girl, Nul-la, I was struck by the remarkable resemblance she bore my wife. Indeed, she is the perfect picture of my lost one at her age. But she says she is the sister of the Sioux chief, and for the last time, my hopes are blasted. Should you ever meet a woman bearing upon her arm that figure, tell her how her father died.

"You have promised me, Kelly, that you would take care of my old servant, and I have faith to believe you. It will not be for many years.

"To you I give the furs in this room. There are many of them, well preserved and very valuable. To you I also give the secret of the chasm. You will find enough there to make you all rich—richer than your wildest fancy could ever picture! And now I have one more request to make. It is that

you will bury me in the bottom of the chasm—will you do it?"

"It shall be done," sobbed the scout.

The old man sunk back upon his couch, patiently and silently awaiting the coming of the dread messenger, Death.

But it possessed no terrors for him.

The Sioux chief spoke to his sister:

"Let Nulela show her arm to the old man."

The girl tore the sleeve from her left arm, and displayed to the wondering group the blue figure of a square and compass thereon.

"Bear-Paw was right, after all," said the scout. "When he awakes we will tell him."

The old man moved restlessly. His pulse was growing faster and weaker.

"I thought I saw her," he murmured.

"Who?"

"My angel wife and my little Marguerite."

"Look here, Bear-Paw," and the scout held up Nulela's arm so that he could see the figures thereon.

"It is her—my daughter—my long-lost daughter!" and father and child were locked in a loving embrace.

His mind wandered:

"Wife, wife—I am coming—I have found her at last!"

His arms, clasped about the neck of his daughter, slowly relaxed, and with the sacred name of wife upon his lips, the old man's soul went out to meet the loved ones beyond the River of Death.

CHAPTER XIV

JUST AS EXPECTED.

BUT little remains for us to tell.

The body of the old trapper was taken to the bottom of the chasm, and buried. After they had returned to the fire—for they all accompanied the old man to his last resting-place—the scout called Snowdrop to him, and said:

"Will you go to the top of the cliff, and bring your father down here? I must see him!"

"Snowdrop will go," replied the girl.

The scout led the way to the main entrance, and showed her the pass up which she was to climb, and in a short time he saw her enter the cavern accompanied by her father.

Kelly led the way to the inner cave, and then addressed the old chief:

"Does Gray Eagle remember his promise?"

"Yes: Gray Eagle never forgets! It was that if the White Panther should take his daughter from Red Pine, and bring him the scalp of the chief, there should be peace between the Blackfeet and the pale-face forever!"

"Your memory is pretty good, chief," replied Kelly. "Now you have your daughter—here is Red Pine, scalp and all! Are you satisfied?"

"It is well! Gray Eagle will do as he has promised; but he will take the Sioux dog to the village of the Blackfeet, and torture him to death."

"Well, take him and go! And I warn you never to come near this place again—a sudden and fearful death awaits you if you do. Now go!"

The old chief removed the cord which bound the feet of Red Pine, never doubting but that he could keep possession so long as his hands were tied.

Red Pine rose to his feet and said:

"A chief of the Sioux does not fear to die! Let the Blackfoot lead the way!"

Gray Eagle was about to reply when Red Pine broke from his grasp, and sprung in the direction of the rear entrance.

All was darkness there, and he seemed to have forgotten the existence of the chasm.

He made the discovery too late!

The yell of defiance changed to one of terror as the Sioux went whirling down to the bottom of the chasm, and the pursuers were only in time to hear the echoes of the dull *thud* as he struck the rocky bottom, a shapeless mass of flesh.

Gray Eagle recoiled in horror from the brink of the chasm and the party returned to the fire.

"Come," said the old chief to his daughter—but she did not stir.

"Snowdrop loves the White Panther, and will never leave him again!"

Gray Eagle did not know what to say or do, neither did the scout; but he saw that something must be done, and he dreaded a scene. He approached the Indian girl, and taking her hand said:

"It may be a disappointment to you, Snowdrop, but it is one you will live through. You must obey your father! In the morning I shall start for my home, and you can not go along! I shall probably never see you again—so you may as well give up this love notion of yours. I would rather be a brother to you, and will always be your friend—nothing more. Now go with your father!"

The Blackfoot queen bowed her head, and sobbed aloud.

So rude a repulse—so decided a refusal, kindly spoken, it is true, but firmly—such a wealth of tender soul-love to be cast aside—was more than she could bear.

"Look a-here," said Jehiel, once more taking hope, "you know I love you, desput bad, Snowdrop. Hain't I rescued you from the durned Indians half a dozen times? S'posen you take me? You can't git Lew, that's sartin! We'll stay right here—I'll buy the old man's traps, and we'll jest be as happy as any two kittens!"

What a strange revulsion of feeling!

Snowdrop put her hand in Jehiel's and said:

"Snowdrop will stay, and be the wife of Long Hunter!"

What need to recount the homeward journey—unless the reader may wish to know what became of the other characters?

Captain Curtiss and the lovely Nulela were married immediately upon their arrival in Yankton—the nearest place where a minister could be found.

Lew Kelly made happy the heart of his little wife by his return. He gave up scouting, for the gift of Bear-Paw had placed him beyond the need of work. He is one of our living heroes, and could, undoubtedly, have told this story much better than I have done.

As neither Snowdrop nor Jehiel had any conscientious scruples about marriage, they remained where they were. Jehiel still inhabits the cave in the Black Hills, happy as mortal can well be, in the love of the BLACKFOOT QUEEN.

THE END

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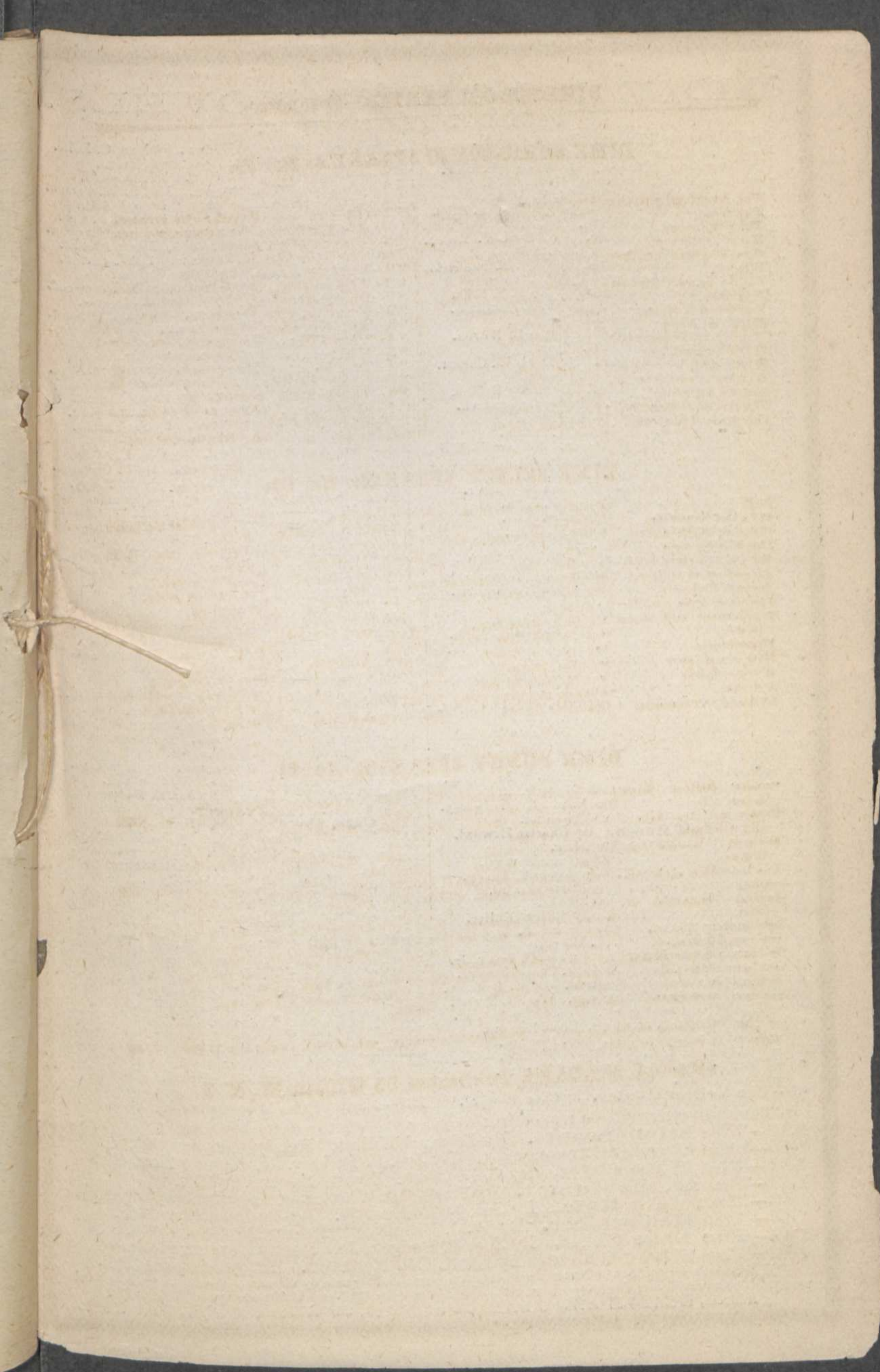
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- 8-The Tall Trapper. By Albert W. Aiken.
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- 10-The Island Pirate. By Capt. Mayne Reid.
- 11-The Boy Ranger. By Oll Coomes.
- 12-Bess, the Trapper. By E. S. Ellis.
- 13-The French Spy. By W. J. Hamilton.
- 14-Long Shot. By Capt. Comstock.
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- 16-Red Hand. By A. G. Piper.
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- 23-Old Kent, the Ranger. Edward S. Ellis.
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- 38-The Heart Eater. By Harry Hazard.
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- 41-Wild Nat, the Trapper. Paul Prescott.
- 42-Lynx-cap. By Paul Bibbs.
- 43-The White Outlaw. By Harry Hazard.
- 44-The Dog Trapper. By Frederick Dewey.
- 45-The Elk King. By Capt. Chas. Howard.
- 46-Adrian, the Pilot. By Col. P. Ingraham.
- 47-The Man-hunter. By Maro O. Rolfe.
- 48-The Phantom Tracker. By F. Dewey.
- 49-Moccasin Bill. By Paul Bibbs.
- 50-The Wolf Queen. By Charles Howard.
- 51-Tom Hawk, the Trapper.
- 52-The Mad Chief. By Chas. Howard.
- 53-The Black Wolf. By Edwin E. Ewing.
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